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FUTURE, PERSONAL
DEVELOPMENT AND
MANAGING CHANGE
IN
THE CONTEXT
OF EVS
TRAININGS

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W DZIAŁANIU"
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**THE UNDISCOVERED
COUNTRY**



**FUTURE,
PERSONAL
DEVELOPMENT
AND MANAGING
CHANGE
IN THE CONTEXT
OF EVS
TRAININGS**



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***If our hopes of building
a better and safer world
are to become more than
wishful thinking,
we will need the engagement
of volunteers more than ever.***

KOFI ANNAN

Voluntary service is undoubtedly very valuable for society. Besides the aspect of service, within the EU programme European Voluntary Service (EVS) the individual learning process of volunteers has become more and more important. In our meetings we are looking for ways how to better support and empower volunteers both in volunteering and learning. In the past few years our discussions have often circled around three topics: future, personal development and managing change. With this brochure we are proud to share some of our ideas, approaches and tools for working with volunteers.

"The undiscovered country" is about learning through experience during European Voluntary Service and introduces our three main topics. These topics are explored in the following three chapters "Future", "Personal development" and "Managing change", both from a more or less "theoretical" and from a practical point of view. Thoughts, ideas, outlines of methods and tools may serve as an inspiration for how to work on this topic during EVS seminars and meetings. "The effect of volunteering" closes the brochure with a practical example on how to organise a country-wide action that strengthens both voluntary work and individual learning.

This collection of articles would not have been possible without the creativity and inspiration from those who committed themselves to the Polish pool of EVS trainers: Marta Brzezińska-Hubert, Ula Buchowicz, Radek Ciszewski, Aneta Cruz-Kąciak, Ania Huminiak, Magda Jakubowska, Dagna Gmitrowicz, Gosia Kopka, Tomek Lubotzki, Melania Miksiewicz, Bartosz Mielecki, Marta Piegat-Kaczmarek, Karolina Suchecka, Wojtek Spychała, Wojtek Szczepanik, Anna Wohlessner and Eliza Zadłużna.

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Warsaw, December 2012

An introduction The undiscovered country. Learning through experience during European Voluntary Service

Dagna Gmitrowicz and Michael Kimmig

Even though the future is unpredictable and uncertain, or in other words “The future is not was it used to be!” (as was the title of an exhibition held in the Museum of Contemporary Art in Toruń 2010) our educational systems are meant to prepare young people for it. As Ken Robinson puts it: “If you think of it, children starting school this year will be retiring in 2065. Nobody has a clue what the world will look like in five years’ time. And yet we’re meant to be educating them for it.” (Sir Ken Robinson, TED Conference 2006) Anyone engaged in education can turn this dilemma into the following question: How can we prepare young people for a future we cannot see into yet?

An unknown future - How to prepare best for it?

In the field of Non-Formal Education you may find two different answers to this question: through the development of competences (knowledge, skills and attitudes) and the development of one’s own personality. Both reflect two sides of the same coin and yet point in very different directions when it comes down to working with young people.

The call for developing competences, or better key competences, comes from an analysis of Europe’s challenges: an unacceptably high rate of youth unemployment, insufficient number of graduates in higher education, a spreading lack of reading and writing abilities and an increasing number of young people who are not in employment, education or training (compare the most current review of the situation of young people in the European Union, EU Youth Report, 19.09.2012). It seems that the old promise that school education paired with job education/studies result in competences that guarantee employability cannot be kept any more. On the other hand,

the new promise that life-long learning together with learning mobility provide key competences that raise the employability of young people has not proved itself yet.

Developing competences – if not reduced to knowledge and skills – is an important part of one’s own personal growth and development. Still, acquiring and broadening competences does not reach the full understanding of personal development. Personal development is more like a journey of discovery. A journey that can be compared to Alice’s adventures in Wonderland. Of all her encounters, it is the one with the caterpillar which points directly towards Alice’s personal development quest: “Who are you?”, he asked Alice, to which she responded: “It’s complicated.”

Personal development is so much more than developing a set of competences: it includes finding oneself, one’s own place in the world, a direction, a purpose, a mission, etc. To the caterpillar’s question we can add those that Kieślowski asked his interview partners in Talking heads (1980, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=66CbSfuyxTU>): Who are you? What is important for you? What do you want for the future?

EVS - Learning from the unknown ...

If the future is unknown, which competences are needed to deal with the new and the unknown? We asked EVS volunteers from an On-Arrival Training (in November 2010, Poland) this question and they came up with the following skills and attitudes:

- ▶ be realistic
- ▶ be self-confident
- ▶ be open/be open-minded
- ▶ use the new situations and combine them with your ideas
- ▶ be prepared to face new situations
- ▶ take care of your own values (“keep your way”)
- ▶ make experience => learn and draw conclusions from it => gain knowledge and wisdom
- ▶ be and think positive
- ▶ relax and accept things
- ▶ adapt
- ▶ be active/pro-active/engage (don’t wait)
- ▶ take risks
- ▶ look for/discover new options/possibilities/opportunities
- ▶ create new opportunities
- ▶ be flexible

Being an EVS volunteer means a great chance to come across a lot of the above mentioned points. Therefore we believe that:

**EVS gives young people the opportunity
to be confronted with the unknown
and make valuable learning experiences.**

The “unknown” are various encounters with other people in an intercultural context. The new volunteers find themselves in an unknown culture, an unfamiliar hosting organisation and a challenging working project. In this environment they are newcomers who have to find their own role and tasks, tackle language difficulties, co-operate within an intercultural team, manage their everyday life, etc.

These challenges are all part of a normal and natural process of acculturation. This process starts with a very positive and enthusiastic stage (“Honeymoon”), followed by a phase of disorientation (“Culture shock”). Step by step, one discovers more and more about the other and also his/her own culture, learns and adapts to his/her cultural environment (“Adaptation”), before s/he gains enough intercultural competence to make the most of the two cultures and live and work happily abroad (“Stabilisation”).

This transition is similar to any process of adaptation to a new environment and new circumstances. In a wider sense, the process of acculturation can be understood as a process of change, transition or transformation which needs to be managed by young people.

What’s so special about this process? Most volunteers are in various change processes at the same time: the process of acculturation, the process of finding and defining one’s own understanding of the role as a volunteer, the process of finding and carrying out a meaningful task, the process of orientation towards education and a future career, the transition from youth to adulthood, etc. All these changes (and many others) are a real challenge for volunteers during their service abroad, being often connected with strong emotions: anxiety, happiness, fear, threat, guilt and/or anger. In order to move on, the volunteer has to deal with these emotions, accept the change and identify the issues related to them. To resolve these issues, the volunteers can take advantage of their own resources, but they often need the help of others: volunteers, facilitators/trainers, mentors, etc., as one cannot really fully rely only on family and friends who are abroad.

EVS - Non-formal learning opportunities

Despite - or often just because of - all these changes and instabilities - young people can make valuable learning experiences during their voluntary service abroad. These learning experiences are made within a structured pedagogical frame of non-formal and informal learning. The way how EVS is organised supports the idea that not only the volunteer adapts to their new environment, but also the hosting organisation adapts to the needs of the volunteer. EVS, as a non-formal programme, offers a curriculum that is not standardised but is (or can be) adapted to the individual.

In this sense, young people can (re-)discover the value of learning. They learn effectively ...

... because they leave their comfort zone of the environment they were used to. This encourages young people to stretch themselves: to try out new things, discover new possibilities, carry out own ideas, risk something, find new ways of problem-solving, etc. They make valuable experiences and expand their learning. ("Model of learning zones" described in T-Kit No 6. Training Essentials, p.67-68)

... because they learn through experience which has a great impact on their future path. It is essential to reflect on the experience made. To make use of one's own experiences and be able to apply them actively requires conceptualisation of the insights gained from the reflection ("learning cycle" or "model of experiential learning" by David Kolb, 1984).

... because their learning is self-initiated and self-directed. Learning within EVS follows the philosophy of self-directed learning where individuals take their learning into their own hands: young people join this learning process voluntarily. They estimate their learning needs, formulate learning goals, identify resources for learning, select and implement methods and tools for learning and assess and evaluate their learning outcomes (Malcolm S. Knowles, 1975).

Confronting the "unknown" - How to support volunteers?

Being confronted with the unknown is sometimes a difficult and hard experience. European Voluntary Service (like other international voluntary services) offers a safe environment for learning because of its support system:

- ▶ Self-directed learning: when learning and change lies in one's own hands, no one can be overwhelmed by events. There might be difficulties and strong emotions to deal with, but the volunteers are in charge of this process.
- ▶ Peer support: volunteers work and live together with other volunteers or build their own support network with other volunteers during EVS training.
- ▶ Mentoring: volunteers are supported by members from their hosting organisation.
- ▶ Training cycle: together with others, volunteers can reflect on their experience, better understand themselves, their role in the project, living and working in an unknown culture. They can support one another, gather new energy, create new ideas for their project and plan next steps. They review their learning and change process and prepare themselves for going back home creating steps into the future.

- ▶ Quality standards for organisations and projects: during the process of accreditation, organisations are introduced to how to create for the volunteer a work project ensuring supportive conditions for learning and change.
- ▶ Youthpass process and certificate: the Youthpass process offers tools to review, reflect and self-assess the learning process and learning outcomes. The Youthpass certificate documents the development of competences and presents them in a document which can be more easily recognised by people not involved in International Youth Work.

Effects of learning mobility experience within EVS

EVS, first of all, affects the local environment and the organisations through the work carried out by volunteers. Their service is essential for acquiring and deepening competences, as well as for personal growth and development. Without this motor, the effects of volunteering on young people are very limited.

What is the impact of volunteering, learning and change on young people? – “The volunteers gain competences needed for mobility (either for learning or work purposes) and return home more mature, more self-confident and, potentially, more active citizens.” (European Union, Mobility of young volunteers across Europe, p.xiii)

However, most studies cover only the short-term impact of volunteering. They focus more on competences and do not elaborate on the development of one’s own personality. Prof. Dr. Alexander Thomas published in 2006 his findings about long-term effects of volunteering. Using interviews and questionnaires, his team interviewed people 10 years after their participation in international youth exchange projects. Despite referring to short-term events, the outcomes are of interest as the findings cover both the development of competences as well as the impact on the individual’s further biography.

Among the personality effects or competences developed as a result of the international experience there are:

- ▶ Self-centred properties and competences (63%)
- ▶ Intercultural learning (62%)
- ▶ (enhancing language skills and general interest in learning) Foreign languages (53%)
- ▶ Social competence (52%)
- ▶ Openness, flexibility, composure (51%)
- ▶ Self-knowledge/self-image (40%)

The first and the last one refer especially to personal development: Self-centred properties and competences include self-esteem, independence, self-assurance, self-confidence, self-efficacy, whereas self-knowledge/self-image refers to self-reflection and analysis of one’s self-image, which is related to the ability to assess oneself more accurately.

The category of “openness, flexibility, composure” refers to a higher openness towards new and unknown situations and individuals, and the ability to react with more composure and flexibility in unfamiliar situations.

Looking at the individual's further life and development, the research group identified four types of different impacts the exchange experience had (compare: Thomas, A. et. al. 2006, p.4):

- ▶ Mosaic (51%): the exchange experience fit into the overall biography like a piece in a mosaic. Together with other important events in life, it contributes and builds up the individual's personality.
- ▶ Domino (31%): young people experience the exchange event as a trigger for a chain of constructive events and activities in his/her future. The exchange experience "is considered as the initial spark or impulse for the individual's further development." (Thomas, A. et. al. 2006, p.4)
- ▶ Nice-to-have (12 %): the exchange did not have a significant impact on the future development. Even if it was experienced as a pleasant, valuable and enriching time, it did not lead to any impulses for change.
- ▶ Turning point (7%): the experience marked a turning point in the individual's biography. It is seen as a major change in life or as a starting point - causing the individual's life to take another course. (Thomas, A. et. al. 2006, p.4)

Reviewing these findings, it is very interesting that in only 12% of the former participants their experience did not leave a major impact on their further biography. All the others state that it had valuable and memorable effect on their own personal development. And these effects were triggered by events that were between two and four weeks long. What effects would you expect interviewing EVS volunteers 10 years after their service?

Voluntary Service - Searching for the unknown ...

It is obvious that the learning experience made during EVS will be quite different for each individual. Consequently, the possibility to plan the impact of volunteering is quite limited. What can be done is to create flexible and supportive conditions for each person, allowing and encouraging them to discover and follow their own individual needs for learning and growing.

"Anyone travelling in the search for the unknown without really expecting it will never be disappointed. I don't mean the big events, quite the opposite - a look, a phrase, an image, an idea, that shifts something in your inner wheels, that later, perhaps much later, when something happens or has become clear, shapes your life forever."

Cees Nootboom (Der rote Regen, p. 189, translation by M.Kimmig)

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**A volunteer once said,
that EVS was giving
him two opportunities:
The experience of living
and working abroad in a
new culture, and second,
the opportunity to start
a new life on returning
home.**

As volunteers come closer to the end of their voluntary service, they often face a lot of questions: What did I achieve? What will I take home? What did I learn? Will this experience help me in my future? How can I use this experience? Will I lose everything I gained when I come back home? What will I do afterwards? What will my life be like? How has my project changed me as a person? And how does this affect my future?

After the Polish National Agency organised the Training for EVS Trainers "Next step - New Life?!" in 2006, our team of EVS trainers focused more and more on approaches and methods addressing these questions. We wanted to be able to respond better to the growing need of volunteers to share ideas, visions and future plans, as well as empower them to define their next steps. Quickly this became one of the most wanted and most important issues during our Mid-term Meetings.

“Future begins today, not tomorrow.”

John Paul II

2.1

Future in the context of EVS training

Tomek Lubotzki

s. 14

The undiscovered country

The subject of future plays a special role in the context of the EVS experience. It's like a central thread which penetrates all stages of the volunteer's project implementation: from its preparation, through its start, implementation, to the conclusion and return from the project. For many volunteers it is also the key motivation in their decision to go abroad within the European Voluntary Service programme: young people either look for space to gain new experiences and develop their social, intercultural and professional competences so that they get better prepared to face future challenges; or they seek a safe haven to keep them away from the challenges and insecurity they associate with future; others wish to get to know themselves better and make sense of which life path is right for them, which direction of personal and professional development they should opt for. It is a challenge in the trainer's work to juggle with these different needs of volunteers during training so as to enable each and every one of them to prepare themselves to cope successfully with the subject of future and develop pro-active behaviours in the context of creating one's own reality, following the conviction that when setting off for a journey in the sea of endless opportunities, it is crucial to build a good ship, gain skills how to steer it safely and become aware of where one wants to get, and that the answer is not to be found on maps or tips from others, but is deep within.

Paradoxically, working on the subject of future is about working on the here and now, on what is alive in me and what I would like to get from life now, it is about overcoming the state of waiting through appreciating the potential of the present time:

“Some people spend most of their lives waiting to start living. Waiting is a state of mind which means that you want the future and reject the present!!! You don't want what you've got, and you want what you haven't got.

You are then like an architect who pays no attention to the foundation of a building but spends a lot of time working on the superstructure.” (Ekhardt Tolle)

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The trainer’s work in the context of future should be based on the assumption that every young person knows deep down what future they desire and already has got the potential to turn it into reality. For this they need to understand their inner needs, hear and trust their inner voice and get to know and appreciate their dormant potential. Of course young people are used to the idea that people from outside will give them a hint which direction to follow, that it is a matter of knowledge that they yet have to gain which will enable them to become fully themselves. This is what they learned from their formal education experiences, the voices of their parents or the society’s beliefs: In order to be happy in the future, you need to be a good student, finish your studies, find a job, etc.

European Voluntary Service, on the other hand, is an opportunity to experience life and self-awareness as a key to self-fulfilment, with the trainer playing an important supportive role in this process. Training may be a space of a dialogue where, with the use of right methods, the young person is invited to get into a deeper contact with her or himself. On the basis of their reflections, gained experiences and the present situation they get to understand better who they are and what they want from life in order to be happy and fulfilled. Such a dialogue will be a lot more intensive and effective when occurring in a group of other young people searching for their way. Their exchanging reflections, common searching for answers to the same questions, and sharing experiences will often be more beneficial than tips from experienced trainers.

F u t u r e

The trainer’s role is not to answer but ask, not to give ready solutions but to direct the youth’s attention towards searching for answers within oneself, not to show the best directions but to strengthen the skill of inner-direction and the potential which is inside each individual. It is quite difficult since a training situation often creates for participants a formal-education-like illusion, where the presented knowledge and information is the key to making a right decision: the youth, as if in a lecture room, often expect ready-made solutions and fool-proof recipes how to handle future challenges. This is why it is so important to create at the very beginning of the training the right conditions and frames for the participants not to wait for answers but to get involved in their own process of self-discovery, their potential and self-awareness of what it is they need to be able to pursue self-fulfilment. The trainer, group, proposed methods and presented knowledge are to activate, support, strengthen and inspire the young person, but it is she or he that has to do the real work.

**CAN'T FIND
THE ANSWER**

**ENJOY
THE QUESTION**

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Methods of working on the subject of future during EVS training

Tomek Lubotzki

Methods supporting work on the topic of future during EVS training can be divided into various categories depending on the set aim and the group's needs:

1. Reflection and working on the inner potential of the participant
2. Working with an in-depth dialogue with regard to one's potential
3. Visualising one's potential
4. Working on planning for change and affirming a positive image of the future
5. Visualising the future

1. Reflection and working on the inner potential of the participant

Method: "Rokeach's Value Survey – a hierarchy of values"

Participants are given a set of values developed by the psychologist Milton Rokeach:

An Exciting Life, Salvation, Freedom, Social Recognition, A World of Beauty, Happiness, Equality, Inner Harmony, Pleasure, True Friendship, A World at Peace, Self-Respect, A Sense of Accomplishment, Wisdom, A Comfortable Life, Mature Love, Family Security, National Security.

First, the participants are invited to arrange these values in a sequence which is relevant to them, representing their hierarchy of values from the most to the least important in their life. It is vital to point out that each value is important and that the sequences are changeable depending on life circumstances. The process of arranging the values is individual and supported by quiet working conditions (appropriate music, working in a chosen space). The participants stick slips of paper with the values printed on them onto an A3 format paper. Next they are asked to describe what they already do in their life to realise the top three values on their list (specific actions and activities). The participants are asked to write down (even in their native language if they wish so) on the

paper with the values anything that comes to their mind. The next step is asking the participants to reflect on what else they would like to do in their life in the near future to realise these values even more fully (activities, actions, etc.). And again they write down the results on the paper. The final step may be sharing in pairs, with a person they trust in the group, the results of their work and choosing one or two ideas for activities and planning their implementation (what I want to achieve, what steps I must undertake, what kind of support I need, who/what can support me). The partner by means of in-depth questions can support the developed plan to be as realistic and as specific as possible. The whole course of the session, which takes about 2-3 hours, is concluded with a discussion.

More information on working with values can be found in the book "Understanding Human Values – Individual and societal" by Milton Rokeach.

2. Working with an in-depth dialogue with regard to one's potential

Method: Dialogue Walk

The participants are asked to walk around the park in pairs and are given a set of questions inviting them to reflect on their voluntary service with regard to the future:

- ▶ How to continue to live the spirit of EVS in the future?
- ▶ What will you miss from Poland when you come back home?
- ▶ How would you like to stay in touch with people you met in Poland?
- ▶ How would you like to say good-bye to Poland and its people and celebrate your farewell party?
- ▶ After your time in Poland, which are the most important values you would like to guide you through your life?
- ▶ Do you think you will experience a culture shock after coming back to your country? What would help you to deal with it?
- ▶ Coming home, what are you looking forward to?
- ▶ What souvenirs and presents will you bring home from Poland?
- ▶ How will you "translate" things you experienced in Poland to others at home?
- ▶ What are your future plans concerning travelling or spending some time abroad?
- ▶ What are your plans for the first days at home?
- ▶ What are your passions? How will you live them after your EVS?
- ▶ What are the first five things you will do after coming home?
- ▶ What would you do if you weren't afraid?
- ▶ Is there something you would like to leave behind you in your project ("something that stays")?
- ▶ Is there something you would rather not take home (a negative feeling, a bad memory, etc.)?
- ▶ After coming back, what will you pick up again and what will you start anew? "Why Poland?" - In which way is your answer different than before coming to Poland?

WHEN YOU ARE 18 THE WORLD IS

- ❑ **A CAREER
OPPORTUNITY**
- ❑ **A PLAYGROUND**
- ❑ **BLACK & WHITE**
- ❑ **SOMETHING TO
CHANGE**

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The logo for Loesje, featuring the name 'Loesje' in a stylized, handwritten script font. The letters are black and connected, with a horizontal line underneath the 'e'.

- ▶ How do you see yourself adapting to and reintegrating into the “old” environment at home? How will you manage this?
- ▶ What are your ideas, dreams and visions for your future?
- ▶ Where do you see yourself in five or ten years’ time?

On return from the walk, the participants share the conclusions from the conducted talks with the rest of the group. One may collect the most moving issues, then the method may serve as an introduction to further work on future. It is vital to emphasise the importance of the dialogue and the exchange with other participants as a way of gaining support and inspiration.

Asking good questions which inspire reflection and self-exploration is an essential part of the trainer’s work. You will find some tips on how to formulate good quality questions here: <http://www.youthlearn.org/learning/teaching/techniques/asking-questions/asking-questions>

3. Visualising one’s potential

An important element of working on future is making the participant aware of their own potential as a starting point for self-fulfilment. It’s a good idea to use visual aids such as newspaper pictures in order not to rely exclusively on verbal descriptions. The proposed method presents two dimensions of one’s potential: the one I see, and the one others see in me:

Method: The Flower of Potential

First, volunteers search and select during a short walk in the neighbourhood one symbol representing:

- ▶ What has my voluntary service/stay abroad has given me?

Returning back, everyone puts his/her object in the centre of a large flower placed in the middle of the circle and the participants are invited for a quick round of sharing what the chosen symbol means to them.

After that, everyone makes his/her own flower with the use of creative, visual forms of expression (there are various materials, newspaper clippings, paints, etc. at the participants’ disposal).

Flower – small petals:

- ▶ My passions/fascinations
- ▶ What I like doing in life best, what gives me joy
- ▶ What can I do? (My skills)
- ▶ My recipes for difficult situations

Flower – big petals

- ▶ What do I give to others?
- ▶ What others appreciate in me?
- ▶ Thanks to my stay in a different culture I am/understand/know ...
- ▶ In a team I can ...

Finally, the participants are invited to share their work’s results in pairs or 3-4 person groups, followed by a discussion in an open forum.

4. Working on planning for change and affirming a positive image of the future

Method: The Door to the Future

(This method is presented from the post-EVS perspective and was implemented during evaluation meetings after EVS, but it can also be adapted for the Mid-term training)

The session takes about 3 hours and the participants go through all stages in constant groups of six. About 10 spaces are previously prepared outdoors (in the garden, park) where groups can freely sit on benches and work in subgroups. The division into groups is at random. After each stage the group moves to another working space and gets from the trainer a description of the new stage. This may be sometimes preceded with the trainer asking questions summing up the previous stage and, if needed, moderating a short discussion.

At the end of the process of working in subgroups there is a reflection in the big group: How was it working together? What was easy? Where were there difficulties? What did the volunteers get out of the process?

Below there is a description of the particular stages, which is at the same time "the instruction" the participants receive at the particular stages of the session.

Stage "Change"

Talk in your group about changes on coming home from the project:

- ▶ What has changed around you?
- ▶ What changes did you notice during your stay in Poland?
- ▶ What have people observed changed in you?
- ▶ What helped you to deal with these changes?

Stage "My potential"

- ▶ Individually reflect on the strengths you see in yourself and what others praise you for.
- ▶ Share this shortly with one other person from your group and tell the partner what other strengths you see in him/her
- ▶ With the whole group, talk for a moment about what you would like to develop in yourselves in the future

Stage "2020"

- ▶ It's 2020 and you are at a meeting of "old time volunteers", introduce yourselves in the circle - who you are, where you work, where you live, what your family status is...

(first think about it individually for 5 minutes before you begin your introductions in the circle)

Watch out: remember to use the present tense: I am, I live, I work, etc.

Stage "My success"

(find yourselves space for individual reflections and then return to your group)

- ▶ (task for individual reflection): It is still 2020, choose one life success which you are proud of: have a closer look at it, feel your success, describe it to yourself in your thoughts, keep that picture in mind

Stage “Steps to the success”

(on returning to the group get into pairs with a person who is ready)

- ▶ Share briefly the picture of your success and together think of 3 concrete steps that you can take to achieve your desired success

Stage “Evaluation” (in the group of 6)

- ▶ Have a round with everyone commenting on and reviewing the course of the workshop:
- ▶ How did I feel? What was valuable to me? What was difficult? What do I take from this experience?

The method has been inspired by the Appreciative Inquiry approach, which is based on the idea of taking advantage of what is good, positive, well-functioning while planning for change and development. More on Appreciative Inquiry you'll find here: <http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/>

5. Visualising the future

One of the most interesting approaches to working on future during EVS training is creating space for the participants to visualise their future. The participants are given a chance to, with the use of their imagination, see with their inner eye and emotionally experience various future options they themselves develop. Positive affirmation of the chosen direction, like a compass, may provide them with strength and motivation to pursue the given path in the future. On the other hand, hearing various ideas of other participants may inspire them to think of alternatives and notice how many possibilities are actually around them.

Method: “The sea of opportunities”

We are going back to our home country, which means we are crossing over the future threshold (we open the door to a room called “Future”). There we come across a crossroads (on the floor there are 4 intersecting roads made with paper tape) where there are 4 possibilities: studies, work, travel and other.

Each road has at its end further junctions called option 1,2,3. The participants are asked to give these options their own significance depending on what possibilities in the given subject they are interested in, e.g. if looking into ‘studies’, option 1 may be studying in their home town, option 2 – studying in a different city in their country, option 3 - studies abroad, or these may be 3 different majors – everything depends on individual ideas. It is important that when making choices, the participants should imagine concrete possibilities, giving them significance and a clear image.

Next, each participant is invited to walk in silence on these different paths of possible choices, trying to stand for a moment on various options and feeling what it’s like, what the consequences of the choice are, what further horizons he or she can see.

Then, the participants, in smaller groups created around the 4 main possibilities, can share their ideas and questions about their choices. To conclude,

in the circle they make a symbolic step forward and share how they see their future after EVS. To support the participants, they can be given educational materials showing them different possibilities supporting their choices. For example:

Guidelines

There are many methodological possibilities of working on the subject of future during EVS, yet it seems that what is more important than applying the right method is creating the right attitude in the participants towards the subject of future. No method will achieve the planned success if the participant's process of working towards planning and making oneself aware of one's own path of development and life aims finishes with the training itself. The training process should be a part of a broader volunteer support system involving the sending and hosting organisations, the mentor and other volunteers in the project. Only with such a large-scale structure can a volunteer use to the full the educational potential that EVS programme offers. Training is an important link in this process as the volunteer comes there fully prepared to work on their own development. It is vital, however, that once the training is over the volunteer leaves motivated and equipped with tools and knowledge which will enable him or her to continue the process of conscious managing change and creating future pro-actively in the context of their potential, needs and dreams.

Work on future is linked to a reflection on reality surrounding young people nowadays. It seems important to create space for young people to discuss society and the role they see in it for themselves. The times are changing dynamically and many tried-and-tested paths to adulthood that worked still a few years ago are now outdated. The school and studies little prepare young people to face today's challenges: how to cope in the era of economic crisis with fear of unemployment, how to handle life in a country full of social tensions, how to find space and form to express one's opposition, where to seek fulfilment when it cannot be found in the propagated lifestyle based on consumption and materialism? A lot of questions and doubts that young people have on such a large scale about their own role in society is something new in the context of EVS and there are no easy answers to them. Training and meeting other volunteers must therefore be a space where future unpredictability and insecurity should be discussed not only from an individual angle but with regard to the present role of youth in society. It's the young people who should create the future of our society, and not the other way round. To do this, however, they need support to be aware of their own potential but also of the social responsibility they have.

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Personal Development



Although we are all taking off to an unpredictable future, we are not going there empty-handed: We bring along our experience, knowledge and skills, our values, visions and dreams, our ability to learn from experience and adapt to new circumstances. Thus, working on one's own future also means bringing one's own personality into focus.

Working on personal development helps to become aware of one's own resources and how to activate them. And this awareness/mindfulness empowers volunteers to make their way into their own future.

3.1

Development – the magic of life and non-formal education

Dagna Gmitrowicz

The magic of life. **Do we get to know ourselves while getting to know the world, and do we get to know the world while getting to know ourselves?** We grow through experience, action and cognition. We compare different things – e.g. the colour of eyes with the colour of water, we listen to various sounds, e.g. the recording of one's own voice, we touch and taste a variety of things – some spicy, some bitter, some smooth and delicate, the smell of burnt cake makes us leap to our feet, and the very first time in doing something, like riding a bike, is often an unforgettable memory. Living in a specific socio-cultural context we often constitute the context for others. This context is a stimulus to our development, and we ourselves are a stimulus to the development of others.

In the given context we discover basic values, social norms, and rules, both negotiable and non-negotiable. We develop a skill of communicating with others, we learn to name emotions, describe phenomena and express our own thoughts, we are able to move, first on own legs, then with various means of transport. We may be getting better and better at making contact with others and maintaining longer-term relationships. We can feel how year by year we are changing and growing. Until, at a certain point, we slow down a little, as soon as our role in the world's jigsaw puzzle has stabilized. The less curious we become and the fewer stimuli we have, the slower our development.

How about if we turned everything upside down and got another chance of getting to know ourselves through discovering the world anew? If only we could enter a land where we can't communicate, where the norms are different and so is the way of moving, where there are no tried and tested long-lasting relations – a world turned inside out? How about going away to another country for a longer period of time?

This is exactly the type of "inside out" world we operate in while working with persons staying for longer in a foreign country, with European volunteers. There are as many strategies of how to cope with the new as there are people. Some

are resistant to acknowledging that some things are different and pretend that nothing has changed, others are terrified and disgusted by it and consider their own norms and customs as significantly better (or sometimes significantly worse), still others find the otherness interesting and eventually learn to integrate it into their own identity, extend their skills, knowledge and develop new attitudes towards various aspects of life.

There is no better or worse strategy, there are only those that stimulate growth to a greater or lesser extent. Working as a trainer with such a diverse group, it's worth bearing in mind and respecting every strategy. Participants often protect themselves against an overly painful culture shock with various behaviours, as everyone reaches readiness, openness to "the new" in their own time, and the worst the trainer can do is to evaluate the attitudes and freeze them in a participant (label someone, e.g. racist or little empathic, etc.). Behaviours, strategies of coping with difficulties are dynamic and changeable, thus something valid today may not be so tomorrow, owing to various stimuli, including also training experiences.

Moreover, the very environment of a training group is a world (culture) in itself, where new norms will be developed, rules will be respected or rejected, where mutual understanding and building relations will be especially important. Training is a micro-world of relationships, dreams and a micro-stimulus to development, both of the participant and trainer.

Such an intensified intercultural context leads to participants' experiencing all kinds of emotions and it's good when the emotions are accepted and noticed by the trainer. An emotion is many a time a signpost pointing to the participant's needs. Common in an intercultural context are such emotions as insecurity, anxiety or fear. One of trainer's good practices in relation to someone's fear is acknowledging it and not getting scared by it. Taming one's own fear by a participant will contribute to a significant step in their development and growth. Riemann distinguishes two axes of fear: the first axis illustrates the relationship with others - with one extreme being fear of blending with the group, fear of lack of identity, and the other - fear of isolation and lack of acceptance; the second axis refers to external phenomena - fear of change, lack of stability or security, or fear of stagnation, lack of influence.

Sometimes one can sense while talking to the participants what they are pre-occupied with, and knowing this, one can suggest adequate methods, experiences where the participant will be able to tame a little the space of their anxiety or more intentionally look into their own reactions.

How to create an environment of effective learning, safe enough so that the participants can exist in a group and at the same time have space just for themselves?

In our long experience of working with such groups we have come to a point where we juggle alternately individual and group work methods. Training activities are voluntary and the participant's freedom of choice is a sign of high

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THE JOURNEY TO YOURSELF

I TOLD MY PARENTS I'LL BE BACK IN A YEAR

Loesje

quality work. The methods oscillate between interpersonal play and intrapersonal reflection.

We hardly ask the participants about their expectations these days, increasingly vital are their needs in the given moment (a question about expectations imposes a perspective of a result and narrows the possibility of exploring the here and now, whereas a question about the need invites the participants to get in touch with themselves in the given moment and context). The methods proposed to the group assume a diversity of learning styles – accommodating linear and mosaic thinking, oriented towards experience and gaining specific knowledge, following good practices and relating to the creative resources of every single individual.

Every result of an activity and the activity itself represent a value. Work based on resources rather than deficiencies empowers the participants and enhances their sense of identity and self-esteem.

We co-create the working environment with the group, discuss a kind of agreement which can be modified and supplemented any time. Everyone has an influence on what's going on. Many times the training programme is developed in course of working with the group, it grows along the group's growth.

Such training approach is very close to the principles of Self-Directed Learning and its' idea that it is the learner who is at the helm of their learning process, following their own learning style, using selected resources, documenting the process and evaluating their own progress. One can create such a training environment as to enable each participant to follow their inner voice, to have moments of reflection, self-assessment and evaluation, to have a closer look at who they are in the given moment, and basing on this potential, to direct their development into the future. On many occasions we invite participants to create their biographies, outlining their educational needs on the basis of the already acquired competences. We use tools facilitating self-assessment as well as invite participants to give one another feedback in the context of the conducted exercise or simulation. We pay special attention to diversifying tools: books, films, talks, interactive quizzes, excursions, meeting various personages. We often adjust the learning environment to the participants' needs and the venue's potential: we work in a conference room and take advantage of the whole centre, we have sessions in museum halls, on boats, during long-hour walks and in cafés.

What would be a person's development without their artistic work? Living in a world where it is widely believed that almost everything to be invented has been invented, we often focus on developing competences needed to recreate things rather than create them. This is another challenge in the non-formal education environment: how to moderate the learning process to stimulate creativity? How to encourage the participant to reach out to their own, often undiscovered, areas of creativity? One can follow some guidelines which may have an effect on the character of the whole meeting:

- ▶ take good care that every participant can make a choice (remember though that a choice in every field of activity may be exhausting for the participant, consuming a large part of their operating energy, which can be balanced with relaxing activities, a walk or a break);
- ▶ don't give tasks based on competition (races, etc.), rivalry requires focus on the result and deprives the participant of free search for alternatives;
- ▶ everyone in the creative work space is involved in some activity. An observing trainer, passing-by, uninvolved persons, etc. may significantly spoil the creative atmosphere;
- ▶ as a trainer don't play the role of a star, and make sure the introduced methods are modest, the more ascetic the trainer and the room's equipment, the more creative the group;
- ▶ remember to equip the "treasury" with various materials available to participants at any time – may everyone have a wide choice of what they can do and how (from stationery to books, films, games, etc.);
- ▶ all the results of the participants' work should have their place (in the room, in the corridor, in the park, in a folder, etc.), which means that during training we do not throw away scribbled-on papers, they may prove significant one day;
- ▶ take care of micro-interactions between participants, and meeting other personages, "masters" - very few things have been developed in solitude;
- ▶ may there be atmosphere of asking questions, curiosity and looking for multiple solutions, if the trainer proposes e.g. only one right answer the participant will have nothing more to add, their motivation to explore the given subject will be much lower;
- ▶ may the room environment (place of working) be shaped by everyone (this includes also chair arrangement).

The above guidelines are only suggestions, it's very likely that there are many other not mentioned here factors supporting participants' creativity.

Over dozens of training events some methods related to participants' development and learning have appeared more often than others, but they often appeared in new (extended or shortened) versions, adapted to the unique group. What is more, from my experience I see that working outdoors in contact with the nature greatly stimulates participants' experience. This is why I encourage you to work with leaves, trees, stones, on the beach, at the water's edge or by the fire. One last thought – the best environment conducive to participants' development is created by a trainer who keeps on developing themselves.

How to create an environment conducive to development?

Dagna Gmitrowicz

If the disciple is the master, why create for him or her an additional space for development? Yet, the disciple chooses the master to be heard. One can listen to and ask questions in a variety of ways.

1. The Labyrinth of Mother Earth

One of the most common methods I use in the open air is the Labyrinth of Mother Earth (called by some the Dancing Queen). Its pattern has accompanied human development since ancient times and can be observed in numerous chapels, palace courtyards, or parks. When I first learned about it, years ago, I immediately adapted it to various methods supporting personal and group process development, both in the training and therapeutic contexts. So far it has been an incredible experience to create a labyrinth together with the group, and I still find the results of such work astonishing.

The labyrinth is not about getting lost, but it's about following a path in order to give oneself over to experience and contemplation. The labyrinth in itself is a great developmental experience, from its construction, going through and deconstruction. It can be made solitarily, with a group of participants, or the whole local community. The biggest I have ever managed to construct, being the size of a football pitch, was in Armenia, in Tatev, built with the hands of participants, trainers and the multi-generational local community using clothes, branches, stones, rubbish and agricultural tools found in the area. One of the smallest, on the other hand, was created on a veranda of an old wooden house in a small Polish mountain village – put together by European volunteers with the use of rice and flower petals.

Applying this method one needs to be one hundred percent positive about it. One should experience the labyrinth several times beforehand to understand its unusual dynamics. **I strongly advise you against using methods that you are not convinced of. The trainer's intention is an equally critical factor shap-**

ing the learning environment and has a great influence on the course of the proposed experience.

I recommend keeping the described procedure as it guarantees a full and safe experience: first, an introduction into the subject of labyrinths, next, making a labyrinth together in a chosen place with materials selected by participants, then, the ceremony of opening the labyrinth (after which crossing the lines is not allowed), going through the labyrinth, the closing ceremony, followed by the deconstruction or leaving the labyrinth where it is (which I leave for the group to decide).

The Labyrinth of Mother Earth – Method description

Aim: can be adapted to the group's needs and the character of training, e.g. the group's getting to know one another, drawing attention to mutual relations or self-reflection related to a selected issue (e.g. what do I need now? what's my purpose?). The stage of constructing the labyrinth is at the same time a very good team building exercise.

Procedure: explaining to the participants the rules of building the labyrinth and its history, emphasising that the labyrinth is about following the mapped out path for the purpose of free contemplation, meditation, and in no way is it aimed at losing one's way. The participants themselves decide about the size of the labyrinth, its location and materials it should be built with (the path should be wide enough to let two people pass each other, and the material should be heavy enough not to be blown away by a gust of wind). The participants create the labyrinth together. When the group decides it's ready there is an official opening of the Mother Earth Labyrinth and from this moment on one cannot cross its lines. Before entering the labyrinth the participants can ask themselves a question which is bothering them or just get ready for a pure experience which will possibly bring a reflection or an idea. You can also put an object into the labyrinth – a symbol representing an issue, question or dream. The participants enter the labyrinth one by one, it's important that at a certain point the whole group should be in it. Each participant get to the centre of the labyrinth and then turns back following the same way out, going past the other participants on the way. It's a good idea if the leader (trainer) stands by the labyrinth entrance/exit and symbolically welcomes every exiting person. Those who have completed the passage wait for the others in silence. Once the last participant has left the labyrinth there is its official closure. The group decides if they should leave it in the place, or whether it should be destroyed. After the whole experience it's important to allow time for individual and small group reflection and a general summing-up with the whole group.

Some labyrinths are more task-oriented, others more mystical - all depending on the theme and energy of the group. Some labyrinths were built with accompanying sounds of drums, some in silence, still others were filled with talks. Labyrinths were made in early morning, at midday sun and at night with the torch light.

2. The path of self-reflection

One of the methods based on the philosophy of self-directed learning is the path of self-reflection offering the participants a diversity of ways of working and adapting them to their individual needs and pace. **The trainer only co-creates the learning environment, it is the participant who fills it with their own wisdom.**

Aim: evaluating a past experience and getting to know oneself in a new context.

Procedure: all around the training centre (garden) there are stations organised with task descriptions and pre-prepared materials. The participants visit the stations at their own rhythm and in accordance with their interests, they can spend the session time to do one, several or all the stations. The participants can choose to complete tasks individually, in a pair or in a small group. By the end of the session there is a short evaluation in smaller subgroups and then in the group forum. The participant can share the reflection results in whatever degree they consider appropriate.

Example stations:

Evaluation of different aspects of the project.

- ▶ *Materials:* drawn on a large sheet of paper big continua from 0 to 10 with assigned themes (aspects of the project)
- ▶ *Task:* Please, evaluate the following aspects of your project on the continua, put your name by your mark
0 – It can't get any worse , 10 – Super

The story of your experience:

- ▶ *Materials:* coloured felt-tip pens, crayons, magazines, glue, scissors, long pieces of blank paper.
- ▶ *Task:* Reconstruct the course of your project, from your arrival up to now. Mark on the time line the key moments of your experience. Describe them, draw them or make a collage.

The importance of giving and receiving

- ▶ *Materials:* two large scale pans (cut out of paper) stuck onto the wall, on the one side a scale pan with "I gave" and the other with "I received" on them, pens, post-it notes.
- ▶ *Task:* Think about what you have already given in the country you've been staying in, and what you have been given. Write down the particular aspects on single post-it notes and put them on the appropriate scale pans.

From another perspective

- ▶ *Materials:* coloured paper, example paper-cut glasses or real coloured glasses, pens, paper.
- ▶ *Task:* Look at your project from another point of view. Imagine that in your project you are to be visited by a famous person, a fictional character, a friend or a family member. Look at the project with this person's eyes. What would they notice while looking at your project? Write down or draw your thoughts.

Self-portrait of change

- ▶ *Materials:* crayons, coloured marker pens, thick paper
- ▶ *Task:* Life is one big change. Look at yourself. What has changed in you since your arrival? What new things would your friends notice? May a symbolic body be a metaphor of your development, your change. Maybe you have large feet because you visit so many new places, or maybe you have a big heart because of your love for..., or maybe you have different eyes as a result of observations... Draw a symbolic self-portrait of change.

The magic of the project

- ▶ *Materials:* pastels, paints, brushes, a cup for water, a large sheet of paper.
- ▶ *Task:* This is a common picture representing the magic of the project. Draw something spontaneously, first thought, association. Optionally, you can draw the picture using your other (not the dominant) hand – thanks to this your picture will be freer, although possibly not as precise.

A poem from the project

- ▶ *Materials:* piece of paper and a pen, optionally – books in various languages.
- ▶ *Task:* This is a story about your observations, astonishment, emotions, various moments you experienced or still experience during your project. Write what your heart tells you, you can take a few random words from the books to be your inspiration.

Finish the sentence

- ▶ *Materials:* written on a large sheet of paper sentence starters, blank sheets of paper, or printed on small cards copies of the following sentence starters.
- ▶ *Task:* Complete the sentences
 - I didn't expect that ...
 - Now I know that I can ...
 - I can thank myself for ...
 - I had this dream about ...
 - The biggest surprise ...
 - I still laugh whenever I think of ...
 - I still don't understand ...
 - Now when I think of it all ...

Map of the project – activities, competences

- ▶ *Materials:* sheets of paper, pens, felt-tip pens.
- ▶ *Task:* Draw a diagram, an outline of all your project activities (both those related to work and done in your free time). Write down everything that comes to your mind, don't be selective, don't choose, any activity may be significant. Then put next to every activity your abilities, attitudes, knowledge which enable you to do the task.

Critical moment

- ▶ *Materials:* scattered stones
- ▶ *Task:* Recall a moment from the project's past which was a serious challenge. Try to remember what helped you get over it? What was your attitude like? Your skills? What role did the others play? Think of other aspects. Think of it all, pick up one of the stones and let the wisdom of the moment linger on.

People's cosmos

- ▶ *Materials:* sheets of paper, pens.
- ▶ *Task:* Mark yourself in the centre of the sheet of paper. Next, draw symbols of people you are in touch with during the course of the project. The closer someone is to you, the more tight the relationship. You can introduce additional markings, e.g. a triangle for a person related to you professionally, a circle for someone who is from the circle of friends, a star for someone you especially care about, underlining for a person you'd like to talk to soon, etc.

There may be as many stations as there are participants' needs and trainers' ideas.

The method requires quite a lot of preparation before its implementation (preparing the descriptions of the stations, graphic symbols and the necessary materials, then arranging the stations around the designated area). It's worth making a small orientation map with the marked stations. It's a good idea to adjust the stations to the needs and the character of the participants. In the course of participants' work it would be better for the trainer to keep away and not disturb them with observation, one can also make an additional station - individual talks with the trainer.

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Change

**A dialogue is the
encounter between
[two people], mediated
by the world, in order
to name the world.**

PAOLO FREIRE

Our growing interest in managing change can be linked to the fact that we tried to put the EVS experience in a broader context of a person's biography. The truth is that a person is not an EVS volunteer - at least not most of their life! And the meaning of EVS and its impulses for the future are interpreted quite differently in different moments of the person's biography. The first chapter is arranged along four main questions: What is change? What is change in EVS about? What strategies do volunteers use to cope with change? and How can we (as trainers) support them? The second chapter shows an example on how to work with stories and metaphors on change.

A conversation on Managing Change

Michael Kimmig and Eliza Zadłużna

Change and stabilisation

MICHAEL KIMMIG: What is change?

ELIZA ZADŁUŻNA: Change, is for me a process, a bridge between two more stable states. Even though more and more often nowadays it is said that stability doesn't exist any more, that there is nothing but change.

MICHAEL: Change happens quickly and continuously. Everything is changing all the time. "Change is life", a volunteer stated. And life is a never-ending story of change, with only short periods of stability in between.

ELIZA: In one of my favourite books about change: "Finding our way. Leadership for an uncertain time" Margaret Wheatley says that stability is an illusion created by our mind as it needs a sense of security. Change, is in her opinion, the only reality taking into account the nature's cycle and the fact that our body exchanges its cells in a certain period of time.

MICHAEL: Doesn't stability provide an opportunity to rest and collect new energy?

ELIZA: I think that the need for stability is more connected with the need to name and understand what's going on, to become familiar with the process of change, rather than the need for rest as such. After all, stability in itself can take a lot of energy if it is the state of stability I don't want.

MICHAEL: That's true.

ELIZA: Then I'm stuck in a state of "stable blockage" which drains energy. In such a case change can be refreshing and energising for a change. The more I think of change, the more it comes to my mind that a lot depends on your attitude and preconceptions with which I approach the given change.

MICHAEL: On the other hand, if everything is changing and we are in a constant process of change it sounds stressful. Once another trainer asked me if we have to change. For him it was an important issue if we as persons could stay as we are.

ELIZA: If that's change I want, which I've invited into my life, then there's positive energy in it. If, in turn, it's change which knocks on my door uninvited, at first there may appear fear and this can suck energy.

"I've realized that adjusting to a different culture, no matter how different or similar that culture might be, it's more difficult than one might expect. ... The biggest differences I've noticed in myself after my EVS experience were probably the ones regarding the way I relate myself with people or situations in general or how I choose to deal with situations that are outside my comfort zone."
Volunteer in Poland

MICHAEL: Some changes I don't invite, I just react to them.

ELIZA: Such changes may cause fear ...

MICHAEL: ... or resistance.

ELIZA: Then you've got to manage such change somehow: you can fight it or ignore it.

MICHAEL: Or run away and hide...

ELIZA: Yes, "hide under the bed and pretend we're not there". Change will find us anyway. Even under the bed.

Personal change

MICHAEL: When we talk about change, we often talk about personal change. "Personal change happens through a journey of discovery." And this journey leads us often to a discovery of our self, of our own personality: I am becoming aware of how I do things, which things are blocking me and how to find and/or create a context in which I can grow and develop.

ELIZA: To me this is also linked with overcoming one's own barriers, which is an approach strongly oriented to self-awareness and understanding. Coaching addresses this a lot.

MICHAEL: Change urges you to take your personal development into your own hands, to better understand yourself, others, the environment around you, the whole world...

"Many of the changes I felt were about my vision of the world, my country, my culture and myself. You can understand better where you think your limits are and overcome them without being aware of it. For me EVS opened doors in my mind I had never thought even existed."

A former EVS volunteer

Change and EVS

ELIZA: You can also change the context and then "things happen differently". It's so much easier to find new patterns in an environment which doesn't know your old patterns. It is said that "change may be invited into life" and EVS may as well be such an invitation.

MICHAEL: That sounds nice. Sometimes we invite and plan change, sometimes change is unexpected and unforeseen... What we do is bring ourselves in situations where change is likely to appear.

“I opened myself for all the influences which could change me. I wanted to add a new chapter into my life which has to be written.”

A former EVS volunteer from Germany

ELIZA: When I look at the structure of the programme I see it as “opening a door to change”. There is a new environment, new people, a possibility to develop and try out new patterns of behaviour and activity. And what’s more, there are lots of surprises – both the pleasant and the not-so-pleasant. In EVS there is a whole range of planned surprises and those that just “happen”. The question is how do we welcome them?

One can handle change provided that it’s perceived as a challenge – something which in the person’s eyes is doable. Otherwise, too many challenges subjectively perceived as too big and overwhelming may result in a feeling of “being stuck”. Change is not objective – it always has a very subjective dimension.

MICHAEL: What for one person is a challenge, for another is a threat, and for yet another is just no big deal.

ELIZA: Exactly. This is why it’s impossible to describe change as such – it’s always change from the person’s perspective. It’s interesting how a certain event can be redefined years later, that one can give it another meaning and see it as a developmental process, acknowledge its value in a broader context.

MICHAEL: Change is not only defined from a person’s individual perspective, but also from a certain moment in his/her biography. In other words: We are aware and define change differently while it’s happening, right after it occurred, a few or dozen years later and even at the end of life.

Change during EVS

MICHAEL: Our second question: What is change in EVS about? What changes can we observe in EVS?

ELIZA: What I find interesting is to what extent EVS is an invitation to change and to what extent volunteers actually do accept the invitation.

MICHAEL: Generally, we can list a few things that may invite change and/or trigger certain changes in a person: new surroundings (city, projects, people, etc.), intercultural differences (language, communication, co-operation, etc.), my new role as a volunteer, changes in the course of EVS (new people in the project, my role/task change, a broader perspective (EVS as orientation stage, a stage of testing things out – volunteering in between education and career, etc.), EVS in the process of growth (self-reliance, responsibility, dependence – independence – co-dependence)....

“Change is the key word during an EVS project. Since

the preparations until the return to your country you have to face millions of changes, in your lifestyle, in your routine, in your habits, and hopefully, in yourself.”
A ex-volunteer from Portugal

ELIZA: Change in EVS has multiple dimensions and all occur simultaneously. I see it as a system – change on one level will affect the others. If something changes in me, it mostly has an effect on relations with others and on my work.

„My character changed by having contact with different people from all over the world. I as one person became international and open minded to the world while I discovered a part of it.“
Volunteer from Germany

„First of all, being outside of your comfort zone makes you wonder if you really need all those things you thought you couldn't live without, and for me it was the main change.“
Volunteer from Portugal

„I accepted the diverse nature of people and of myself. I changed my outlook on my own future and understood that life is a way. I changed my opinions about stereotypes of people.“
Volunteer from Germany

Managing change

MICHAEL: What strategies do volunteers use to handle change?

ELIZA: The ability to analyse and notice what is, to be able to notice that this “something” is changing. This “something” is to do with me, my life, my relationships. What is necessary is knowing how to make a “freeze-frame”, how to step out of the process for a moment, since if I'm a constant part of it, it's difficult for me to notice the process of change. EVS is just a chapter of life, so it's also the ability to see in what way it fits with the other ones.

There are pro-active strategies – when the participants feel that they have or want to have an influence on something, and “escapist-defensive” strategies – pretending nothing has happened.

Supporting volunteers during their change process

MICHAEL: While looking for information on managing change I came across a cup with a caption: “One cannot manage change. One can only be ahead of it.” If managing change has its limits, how can we support volunteers as trainers?

ELIZA: For me interesting in EVS is a combination of changes which I want, plan

for and invite into my life, and those that I'm not aware of and which appear when e.g. I lose some close relations which did not survive the separation. It's also dealing with the fact that a lot of things do not meet my expectations and the emotions it triggers. Managing change is in great measure about managing emotions.

MICHAEL: In literature you may find plenty of models that describe personal change. I personally like John Fisher's Transition Curve, because it describes emotions that are associated with moving through the transition (anxiety, happiness, fear, threat, guilt, anger) as well as reactions towards change (depression, denial, disillusionment, hostility, gradual acceptance, moving forward). With the help of his model, one can identify and read better the signs of emotions, s/he is caught up in the process of change. (View Fishers "Process of Transition" diagram on <http://www.businessballs.com/freepdfmaterials/processoftransitionJF2012.pdf>)

ELIZA: Change which I welcome will at first involve positive emotions, whereas change I wasn't expecting will rather evoke fear and anxiety.

MICHAEL: During EVS volunteers are going through a lot of different changes at the same time, some of them are connected with positive emotions, some with negative ones. Change means de-stabilisation for the individual, some changes even need de-stabilisation...

ELIZA: And this when fear of chaos and destabilisation may step in, depending how much security the person needs or what is the source of this sense of security, external or internal.

MICHAEL: Supporting someone in moving successfully through a transition process, s/he needs to understand his/her past, present and future: What is his/her past experience of change? What impact does it have? How did s/he manage change? What did s/he have to give up? What will s/he gain from change? What resources does s/he need to activate? etc.

ELIZA: I think we're getting back to the starting point - that they key in the process of change is awareness.

MICHAEL: Awareness of one's own emotions. Awareness where they are in the process of change. We can work towards accepting the change and a positive attitude towards change. And creating possible next steps.

**"I think I was dealing with change by being totally honest with myself, prioritizing, emotionally speaking, letting go of feelings that weren't useful in any way and taking chances. After doing so, the whole exploring differences became a joyful and fascinating thing to do."
Volunteer in Poland**

ELIZA: Work on accepting change is work on checking how far my scope of influence reaches in this situation, in other words strengthening self-direction. Often my only scope of influence is working on my own emotions and attitude

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towards what's going on.

MICHAEL: Which links our conversation to self-directed learning...

ELIZA: What else?

MICHAEL: Managing change means also managing stress connected with change, looking for (emotional) support and identifying main issues/themes/tasks that have to be resolved. And with this, we can support volunteers.

ELIZA: Precisely. Considering that one attends training once in a while, we cannot provide long-term support, and rather support volunteers in identifying resources in themselves and their environment and where they can get it.

MICHAEL: Volunteers are at different stages in their process of change: What do volunteers need in the specific phase of change? What do they need from others? From us? From the project? From support persons? From the National Agency? When they come to our training they can learn from one another.

ELIZA: In my opinion volunteers first often need a "safe place to express their emotions": to be heard out, to be able to name and sort what is going on in their life, to be able to make a decision how they can manage such change.

Additionally, during training they "generalise their experience" - face the fact that their experience is not only person-specific because others go through a similar process, and this already gives them a greater sense of security knowing they are not alone in what they're going through.

I think that our role is also to name and sort that experience.

MICHAEL: "Naming" is also a nice bridge to working on metaphors ...

Managing change. Working with metaphors and stories

Michael Kimmig and Eliza Zadłużna

**„A large part of self-understanding
is the search for appropriate personal metaphors
that make sense of our lives“
Lakoff and Johnson**

Storytelling has always been essential to pass on information, knowledge and wisdom from one generation to another. It is the *“art of using words and actions to reveal the elements and images of a story while encouraging the listener’s imagination.”* (National Storytelling Network <http://www.storynet.org/>). Storytelling is used to educate others, to allow personal insights and stimulate creative problem solving. Even though every individual and every culture has developed their own way of telling stories, storytelling can be seen as a universal human characteristic.

Metaphors and stories

“Life is a stage” is a famous quote from Shakespeare. A metaphor is a word or phrase that makes a connection between two sometimes completely unrelated subjects in order to emphasise their similar qualities. This very difference can change the perspective, stimulate new images and ideas, create a tension or dissonance in our minds. The image enclosed in a metaphor helps us to remember information and expand our learning potential. If used well, metaphors are an effective way of passing on an idea and allowing a deeper insight and understanding of ourselves and others. If used poorly, metaphors leave behind confusion.

Stories could be treated as extended metaphors. Any story, whether it is a short anecdote or a full-length fairy tale or myth, basically has a similar format and structure: The main character encounters a problem, conflict or challenge, which they (have to) deal with. After going through a series of adventures, the hero manages to resolve the quest and finishes – often enriched – his/her journey.

Nigel Watts (1996, in: Margaret Parkin 2001, pp.15-16) lists the main elements of this journey:

- ▶ The status quo - where we get introduced to the hero/heroine.
- ▶ The trigger - something happens which disrupts the status quo.
- ▶ The quest - the response to the challenge.
- ▶ The surprise - which really slaps us in the face.
- ▶ The critical choice - the dilemma.
- ▶ The climax - the choice we make.
- ▶ The reversal - the change that results from the choice we make.
- ▶ The resolution - if the reversal is sustained.

Enhancing learning and memory

If the information weaved into the story creates vivid images in the minds of the listeners, the message easier reaches the listeners, is very well understood and remembered. The visualisation enclosed in stories enhances learning and memory. This works best when:

- ▶ the information is presented in its context: Stories contain patterns and templates that help us to see events as parts of a bigger picture. In that way, we more likely discover some meaning in our own lives and we are able to apply the learning results in our future.
- ▶ the information evokes curiosity and interest: Metaphors and stories interrupt our usual stream of thoughts if the information doesn't fit with our established patterns and templates. *"It gives us a 'What??' sort of experience, and jolts us out of our logical, habitual thinking. It can also bypass our natural resistance to change."* (Margaret Parkin 2001, p.14)
- ▶ the information involves emotions: Stories can help us to become aware of and manage our emotions. A story triggers positive feelings of curiosity, surprise or excitement, as well as negative feelings of sadness, depression or anger.

Example: Managing change. Working with metaphors and stories during EVS trainings

Addressing the issue of change during EVS training means taking into account the fact that this issue requires a deeper reflection, on the one hand, on the very phenomenon of change – what it is and what is characteristic of it, and, on the other, an in-depth analysis of one's own strategies of coping with a specific change related to participation in the European Voluntary Service.

The method proposed below incorporates these two dimensions – the dimension of general reflection on change as such, and the personal dimension concerned with experiencing change during EVS. It also offers freedom in choosing the "depth of reflection", allowing the participants to decide to what degree they want to share their personal experiences and thus providing sense of security for work on this issue.

Aims: initiating a discussion on change and its characteristics, inviting participants to reflect on what changes they encountered during EVS and how they managed them

Duration: about 2,5 hrs

Number of participants: 16-25

Materials: printed on coloured cards and stuck on the walls quotes on change, selected stories (from poetry, children’s books, fairy tales, movie clips, etc.), 2 laptop computers, a flip chart, flip chart paper, marker pens

Method description: on the walls of the training room there are printed on coloured papers quotes on change. The participants walk around, read the quotes and choose one which for whatever reason appeals to them most. Next, they shortly talk about their choice with persons who have chosen the same quote.

“Live in the present. Do the things that need to be done. Do all the good you can each day. The future will unfold.” – Peace Pilgrim (1908-1981, American Peace Activist)

“You must have courage, whatever the test, however many times you fall, stand up just once more.” – Author Unknown

“The bigger the challenge, the greater the opportunity.” – Author Unknown

“If there is no wind, row.” – Latin Proverb

“The ultimate of being successful is the luxury of giving yourself the time to do what you want to do.” – Leontyne Price (Opera Singer)

“Once we accept our limits, we go beyond them.” – Brendan Francis

“Experience is not what happens to a man/women, it is what a man/women does with what happens to him.” – Aldous Huxley (1825-1895, British Biologist, Educator)

The whole procedure is then repeated – the participants choose a second quote which they found inspiring and discuss it shortly with others who made the same choice.

In the next stage, participants get into four 4-5 person groups. Each group is given inspirational material on change:

- ▶ “Autobiography In Five Chapters” (Sogyal Rinpoche: Tibetan Book of Living & Dying: <http://kibrahacha.com/poetry/collection/11.htm>)
- ▶ “Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland” books, a review and a fragment of animated film “Alice in Wonderland – Caterpillar”
- ▶ “Who moved my cheese?” animated film (Spencer Johnson, 1998)
- ▶ A fragment of the programme “Britain’s got talent” featuring Susan Boyle. (All films available on www.youtube.com).

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The participants' task is to familiarise themselves with the particular fragments of poetry, a review, a film or a TV programme, and next start a discussion on change using the following supporting questions:

- ▶ What is change? How would you describe it?
- ▶ What different aspects of the process of change did you discover on the basis of the analysed literary/film material?
- ▶ What stages/phases can you distinguish in the process of change?

Each group then summarises for the whole group the results of their discussion, focusing on their understanding of the process of change and its characteristics.

In the next stage, the groups change their composition (there are new 4-5 person groups) and the participants are invited to discuss changes they have experienced in their voluntary project. This is based on the following questions:

- ▶ What aspects of the process of change do you see in your life during the EVS project?
- ▶ How did you cope with change related to your EVS project (coming to Poland, participation in the project, new relationships, etc.)?
- ▶ How did you manage these changes and what helped you in this?
- ▶ How could you use this experience to manage changes which are ahead of you, in the future?

In the end, small groups share results of their work providing the basis for discussion on changes during EVS and different strategies of coping with them and managing them.

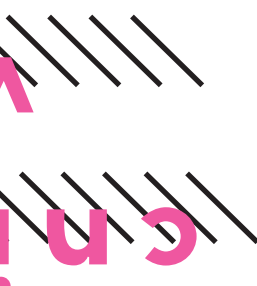
Applying metaphors and stories

Through metaphors and stories we can address various issues connected with change, transition or transformation. Even though they are more typical of coaching, we find the following areas useful in working with volunteers:

- ▶ **Envisioning and goal setting** (What do you want to achieve?): Visualising a picture of the future direction, establishing a vision for work and/or life, setting specific goals, working out steps towards these goals.
- ▶ **Problem solving** (How are you going to resolve it?): Acknowledging the existence of the problem, analysing problems, developing creative and practical solutions, identifying barriers, considering suitability of options and identifying learning needs to solve the problem.
- ▶ **Re-framing and creativity** (Let's look at this another way.): generating ideas, encouraging creative thinking, seeing problems in a different, more positive light and finding ways of applying ideas.
- ▶ **Empowerment** (You can do it!): Identifying what can and can't be controlled, encouraging self-reliance, taking responsibility for own actions and identifying empowering or limiting beliefs.
- ▶ **Success and self-esteem** (I did it!): recognising and rewarding success, building up healthy levels of self-esteem and self-confidence, particularly in dealing with difficult situations.

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Did you know that it is so simple to change the world?

That it all starts with a first step? With one simple action?

Voluntary Service – as its name suggests – is an activity carried out to serve, help and support other people. Its main impact is therefore directed towards people and their local environment. At the same time the service carried out by volunteers enables them to acquire and deepen competences, and their personality to grow and develop.

The time a volunteer spends in seminars during EVS is short in comparison with his/her overall stay. That's why we would like to add an example of a country wide campaign that shows how to strengthen the impact of volunteering, at the same time giving volunteers the opportunity to make valuable learning experiences.

The effect of volunteering.

Dagna Gmitrowicz and Anna Wohlesser

How to organise a country wide campaign?

Sometimes you would like to change something, but you are not sure where to start and if your actions will really have an impact, an effect on people, on the environment, on the world. And suddenly this change seems to be too big for you to manage...

This is our story. It could also be your story. It is the story of how simple actions change the world. And how to do it. Our story took place in 2011 in Poland. It might as well have been anywhere else.

We, that is Dagna and Anna, facilitators/trainers of the pool of trainers from the Polish National Agency. That's the Polish National Agency of the Youth in Action Programme. That's 21 former EVS Volunteers. That's 15 NGOs from all over Poland with their EVS volunteers involved. That's people taking part in our workshops, activities or simply people walking in the streets.

We all came together for two days in September 2011. To change the world by simple actions. We invited former EVS volunteers to come to Warsaw and work in four projects. 21 young people from 13 countries followed this call: they invented activities to re-activate the Haller square (in co-operation with the Praga Community Centre), they carried out a happening with kites and lanterns (in co-operation with the Dorożkarnia Community Centre), they created an EcoSofa in Magazyn Sztuk and they played with children in the Korczak Children's Home.

In the beginning, our activity was planned to happen only in Warsaw. As news about our project spread, we received a lot of positive and enthusiastic responses from many organisations all over Poland. We invited them. Even though we could not offer financial support, the response we got was overwhelming. Altogether 11 organisations from all over Poland joined this project.

In a very short time this project became a Poland-wide action.

The key to our success

We realised soon that to really have an impact our actions need to be based on values and intentions that we all share. In the end, we agreed on three intentions and invited everyone to plan their activities according to them:

- ▶ to do something that is needed,
- ▶ to do something that lasts and
- ▶ to do something that serves yourself and others.

Having these three criteria in mind, we could invent, create and evaluate every activity during our project or decide what step to take next. This worked out fine. It was so simple. And it made things happen.

Making things simple

So, how to make things simple? – simple means *naturally* being connected to people and their local environment. *Being honest with yourself and others*. Having *a clear motivation and purpose*, why are you doing what you are doing. Having a precise aim and clearly defined values. *Acting with joy and lightness*.

Whenever challenge arises, welcome it and try to understand its hidden message, use its power to act, not to escape or to protect. We are not saying we know how to do this, we're just saying that we tried.

We evaluated each activity in this project (from the very beginning when we promoted the project, until the final evaluation) using these three criteria: Is it (really) needed? Is it long lasting? Does it serve yourself and others?

- ▶ *What does "needed" mean?* – Everything that comes from the bottom of your heart, everything that serves you and truly responds to the needs of others and the community. This requires being grounded and honest with yourself, being sensitive towards others, being aware of the process, questioning and checking regularly if you are on the right track, as well as having the courage to change it if necessary.
- ▶ *What does "lasting" mean?* – It may be strong as iron and brittle as cereal biscuits; it can take years and may appear only for a moment. It means importance, significance; something that is easy to continue, that can grow as a seed, which has a domino effect.
- ▶ *What does "to serve" mean?* – In this world, we are connected. Connected to other beings, to a community, to nature. Your actions may serve as a contribution to make life easier, happier and lighter. Your service, your contribution is therefore connected as much to yourself as it is to others. Being gentle and appreciative with yourself is the first step of serving others.

If you follow these criteria and evaluate your activities according to them, it may happen, that...

- ▶ ... the things that are most needed are the simplest ones.
- ▶ ... the things that are most needed and simple, are the ones lasting forever.
- ▶ ... what serves you and others is something that is very simple, truly needed and lasting a very long time.

Establishing and facilitating communication in a country wide project

The preparation of the main event took more than nine months. Staying in touch with all the different actors involved, communicating and coming to decisions was a great challenge and at the same time a great source of learning.

The practical means of communication were: the communication in the team, the use of social media and video conferences.

Communication within a team

An important aspect of our communication was, first of all, the communication in the team of organisers. Giving space and time for **regular meetings** to

address all the issues that might come up while planning and carrying out such a project is one of the key issues. Also having trust that all what is happening is relevant and important for the project as a whole: project aspects, emotions, individual motivation and other factors. Many walks. Many skype talks. Many talks on the phone and hundreds of emails. Using dropbox (www.dropbox.com) to share documents and files helped a lot.

Social media

To communicate with all the people and organisations involved, we decided to use the online platform NING (www.ning.com). This platform provided a common space, where people could share information and keep others up to date. It helped not only all the people to stay connected but to give a sense of belonging together to a big project. It raised awareness of all the different processes going on all over Poland. It became part of our everyday work in the preparation of the project as it needed awareness, energy and updates from the team. Everyone, at all times, had access to all information, as it was all stored on the platform. The whole platform was in English and Polish to make sure that the access to information is supported. We enjoyed using the NING platform as once it is created it is quite easy to organize. However, the setting up and being clear what is needed was more tricky than expected and therefore took longer time. Even though the platform can be created easily the challenge lies in organizing the information in such a way and with such logic that it is easily accessible to everyone. We had to realize that what seemed clear and logical to us was not always understandable for others. So changes in the design and the platform were happening all the way through the project.

From our experience, we would recommend the following:

- ▶ Check if you really need a platform. Does it serve you? The project? The people involved?
- ▶ Create the structure of the platform together with participants and others to ensure maximum clarity. And get feedback before you publish it.
- ▶ Participants will join the platform until the last moment, be ready and welcome them.
- ▶ Common meetings beforehand in the chat-room or on skype can be useful. Introduce the schedule of such meetings from the very beginning. Or you may agree all together on when you can meet. Then you may find doodle (www.doodle.com) useful.
- ▶ Accept diversity and slow down :)

Video conferences

To connect people involved, we organised video conferences. Technically, there are several possibilities: most well known are Google Hangouts (via Gmail or Google+) and Skype. In our case we experimented with Skype. We gained a lot of insights into what is working and what could be improved.

- ▶ In order to have a video conference call with so many people, one person has to have skypePRO (www.skype.com/intl/de/skypepro/). If you do not want to see everyone but just to talk you can also do it with normal Skype.
- ▶ First make a test to see how it works and what you need to be aware of.

- ▶ Prepare a short and simple “How to” document and send it to all participants (with screen shots)
- ▶ Agree on one person moderating the meeting. S/he will bring clarity and make sure everyone is being heard.
- ▶ Switch off microphones once you get online with so many other people. Otherwise you will hear squeaking and scratching noises, which makes it harder to communicate.
- ▶ When the video call did not work during one moment of our project, a new system was developed. One person would speak. All the other people switched off their microphones. This one person would talk about his/her project. The others could comment or ask questions by writing into the Skype interface. So it was a chat with a person speaking.

All in all, one of the biggest recommendations after this project is: **Use your phone!** This is the moment where things started to happen quicker, easier and with more energy.

Appreciation for the engagement of people involved

From the very beginning of this project, when it was not even sure yet what we would do exactly we already felt a big need of all the involved partners to be appreciated. For the efforts, for their time, for their investment. We tried to do this by different means:

- ▶ *Poland wide video conferences*: To not only connect the different actions, but also to give the organisations appreciation and thanks for their projects, their time, their effort.
- ▶ *Certificates “Thanks to you the world is changing”*: All the participants and organisations received the certificate .
- ▶ *Final event*: At the end of all the projects in Warsaw, all the involved organisations and volunteers were invited for a common grand party.
- ▶ *Being thankful*: Saying thank you. During the project we tried to really show all the involved parties how grateful we were for their commitment. Through emails, text messages, phone calls, meetings, we tried to express our gratitude.
- ▶ *Documentation*: We invited a film crew to work with us in making a documentary about the project. Therefore we have something to show from the project but also to say thank you to the different organisations. (www.youtube.com/watch?v=u4xb9fx8PBg)

However, words and appreciation are only one way of conveying this. You may think of different ways of communicating your honest appreciation.

It all starts with a first step...

Our story took place in 2011 in Poland. It might have been anywhere else. And it will be everywhere else. The simplicity of the project is its strength. You may go to an institution or a group of people in your local community. You may ask them what they need and come up with something that is lasting and serves yourself and others. It might be building a tree house, organising a get-together event with the neighbors, or anything else. Choose the thing that excites you most and make a first step. Just like this. Simply.

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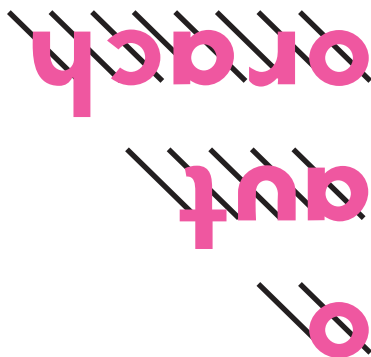
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Foundation for the Development of the Education System

The Foundation for the Development of the Education System is a State Treasury foundation. It supports activities focused on the development of education in Poland. FRSE realises this goal among others, through the coordination of educational programmes of the European Union.

Two main programmes managed by FRSE: Youth in Action and Lifelong Learning Programme are given the highest priority, as they present the broadest offer to young people, learners, graduates, researchers and adults alike.

Thanks to opportunities offered by EU educational programmes, both schools, HELs and individuals can find a convenient way

Youth in Action Programme, Action 2. European Voluntary Service

Youth in Action is a programme of the European Union open to young people aged 13-30 where they can pursue their interests, develop skills and gain new experiences. Youth in Action encourages to take up various challenges, ranging from international youth exchanges, European Voluntary Service and organisation of initiatives on behalf of local communities, trainings, and seminars to staging meetings and debates with decisions makers in the field of youth policy.

for raising competences, continuing education, participating in international exchanges, learning languages, meeting peers from other countries, exchanging experiences and pursuing personal development.

National Contact Points for ERASMUS MUNDUS and TEMPUS EU programmes operate at the Foundation along with Eurodesk National Office and SALTO Eastern Europe and Caucasus Resource Centre (EECA). The Foundation is also responsible for European language Label initiative and eTwinning programme in Poland. Polish Unit of Eurydice Education Information Network in the countries of the European Union operates at FRSE, too. Since 2007, the Foundation manages

Polish-Lithuanian Youth Exchange Fund, since 2008 Scholarship and Training Fund, and since 2009 Sciex-NMSch Polish Swiss Scholarship Fund.

European Voluntary Service (EVS) is Action 2 of Youth in Action programme, which provides young people aged 18-30 with opportunities for voluntary activities abroad. Participants of European Voluntary Service contribute to the work of various non-governmental organisations in the countries of the European Union, Eastern Europe and Caucasus, as well as in other countries, without bearing major costs of participation in the project European Voluntary Service is a source of satisfaction with doing something for others, as well as an opportunity to gain specialist knowledge and competences, which may be difficult to gain in local environment.

Foundation for the Development of the Education
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National Agency of the Youth in Action Programme /
Agencja Narodowa programu „Młodzież w działaniu”

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