

Good Practices



**SALTO-YOUTH**  
EUROMED  
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**Erasmus+**  
Tools for Learning

# Practical guide

**How to be  
a mentor in  
Euromed European  
Voluntary Service  
projects?**

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The aim of this guide is to provide mentors involved in European Voluntary Service (EVS) projects with practical tools, tips, guidelines to fully be aware of their role as support of volunteers involved in Evs in Euromed cooperation. This guide was inspired by the training for mentors and responsible of projects run in Tunisia, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine in 2014 within the Evs accreditation process.

### Who is the mentor in Evs projects?

The mentor is a key actor in European Voluntary Service: his/her role is to provide to the volunteer the **"on going personal support throughout the duration of the activity"** which is one of the main responsibilities of organisations participating in Evs . The role of the mentor is like a shadow- invisible- but always present, helping to put various pictures together and see bigger and different perspectives, whose role is to support socially, emotionally, culturally and learning-wise a foreign volunteer; encourage and evaluate the learning process as well as creating supportive and trust atmosphere in goal setting of the volunteer.

### Why is important the role of Mentor?

The role of mentors give a specific quality to Evs, which make different this international long term voluntary programme from other international voluntary programmes and initiatives: keeping the **attention and focus on the learning dimension** of the service and the **inclusive approach concerning the recruitment of volunteers**.

This bring as consequence that it cannot be required any specific skill or qualification to take part in Evs.<sup>1</sup>

**So it cannot exist an Evs project without a mentor!**

### Why the mentor role is so important in Euromed framework?

Mentors in Euromed framework should also take care of an additional role: to help volunteers to understand the specific geopolitical and cultural context in which they act as international volunteers. The capacity to guide the volunteers and help them to be more aware of the reality and of the political and cultural challenges they might face, could be very important both for mentors of receiving organisations supporting Programme countries- volunteers and for mentors of sending organisation supporting MEDA countries<sup>2</sup> volunteers during their service in programme countries.

**Mentoring...**  
**successful people never reach their goals alone**

1 - Erasmus plus programme guide, year 2015, pag 73

2 - Erasmus plus programme countries are the ones belonging to European Union + Norway, Leichtenstein, Iceland, Turkey and Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia. For a complete list see Erasmus plus programme guide, year 2015, pag 24

# RESPONSIBILITIES OF A MENTOR

## Mentor of Receiving organisation

The receiving organisation must provide to the volunteer a mentor for **personal support** with whom he/she will have regular meetings.<sup>3</sup>

### His/Her responsibilities are:<sup>4</sup>

Giving the volunteer the opportunity to integrate in the local community, to meet other young people, to socialise, to participate in leisure activities etc. ;

Supporting the volunteer to carry out a self reflection on the learning outcomes of the Evs activity (through the use of Youthpass process);

Providing support on a personal level for all duration of the service

Encouraging contact with other, EVS volunteers whenever possible

Facilitating, in a conflict situation, the communication between the volunteer and the local environment or the Receiving Organisation.

Establishing and maintaining, in case of serious accident, appropriate contact with the Sending Organisation, her/his next of kin (if required) and the insurance company (if necessary).

## Mentor of Sending organisation

The sending organisation might appoint a mentor which can be a **reference person for the volunteer before, during and after the service**. His/her role is also to **provide personal support** to the volunteer by:<sup>5</sup>

Taking care of the preparation for the volunteer before the departure according to individual needs and learning opportunities of the volunteer;

Keeping in contact with the volunteer during the project and provide support anytime is needed;

Providing support to the volunteer to help reintegrate them into their home community;

Giving the volunteer the opportunity to exchange and share experiences and learning outcomes;

Providing guidance regarding further education, training and employment opportunities

## **Profile of the mentor in the receiving organisation: how to make the right choice?**

Mentor role include several and different responsibilities and require commitment, motivation, energy.

There isn't a perfect profile of the mentor, it not requires any specific professional background but according the rules of the programme he/she **must not be the same person who provide task related support to the volunteer** (so called R.O.P.<sup>6</sup> or supervisor).

The main reasons of this prohibition are:

- being supported from a person who is not involved in the daily life of the Evs project can help the volunteers in becoming more aware of their experience by taking a break from daily life in their project and reflect on what they're learning by establishing a dialogue with a person who don't have a direct involvement in the daily activities.

- to guarantee that the mentor could provide an independent and objective evaluation of the situation in case of crisis or conflict;

So a possible way to identify the right profile of the mentor is to appoint someone who is external to the organisation or, if internal, is dealing with different activities/tasks from the ones which are assigned to the volunteer(s). At the same time it is important that the mentor has a good knowledge of the organisation and local community who host the volunteer in order to be able to support him/her.

A good practice adopted by many Evs project is to appoint as mentor a former Evs volunteer who can bring an added value to this role because of his/her previous experience as Evs volunteer.



***the mentor is not a person who assigns and supervises the volunteers' tasks***



***the mentor is not a surrogate parent or therapist***



***the mentor should be identified by the receiveing organization***



***the mentor should be aware of the role and position in the Receiving Organization relation with the volunteer, obligations and responsibilities within the project***

6 - Responsible of Evs project or Supervisor, a person appointed by receiving organisation in charge of supporting the volunteer with regard of his/her daily tasks.

## Knowledge, attitude, skills of a mentor

It doesn't exist a perfect or a "super" mentor: everybody can become a mentor, but it is important to be aware of the following aspects:

### Knowledge

- good knowledge of the receiving organisation environment and of the local community where the volunteer is hosted including cultural aspects,
- knowledge of administrative procedure which regards a foreign person in the country (such Visa, Health system, etc. to be ready to support the volunteer(s):

### Attitude

- a good listener
- open mind and ready to deal with diversity
- reliable and flexible to adjust according to the volunteer's need
- motivated and interested in support learning of a young person

### Skills

- coaching or counselling skills
- language skills (common language with the volunteer)
- ability in using variety of techniques, skilled in giving and receiving feedback, encourage and facilitate non-formal learning
- ability in setting boundaries and addressing problems or challenges in a constructive way

**Mentor:  
taking charge...  
turn it on  
its head ...**



**"Reflective practice is only  
effectively understood by  
becoming immersed in doing it  
rather than reading about it  
or following instructions**

Gillie Bolton

### How to support learning of Evs volunteers during their projects?

- at the beginning of the project agree with the volunteers on the purpose, timeframe and methods for analysing and sharing their learning experience;
- introduce and explain the framework of 8 key competences
- encourage the volunteers to keep a regular diary to keep track of different activities, emotions, changes during their Evs experience;

- help the volunteers to be more aware of their learning achievements by using different tools and methods to facilitate the analysis and reflection on what they learn (drawings, stories, walk...)
- encourage the volunteers to draft small short term learning objectives or long term structured learning plan

### **Some useful tools you can use:**

**Example of Evs Learning diary:** <http://youthpassprocess.eu/>

**Example of activities to understand/practice 8 key competences:**

<https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/toolbox/tool/youthpass-8kc-folded-fortune-telling-origami.1577/>

<https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/toolbox/tool/piece-of-cake-key-competences.1226/>

## **Try to learn about your volunteers as much as possible:**



**Their background: who is he / she? Where does he/ she come from?**



**Their interest: what does he/ she likes? Dislikes? Passions, Hobbies, talents, favorite food, what are your communalities...**



**Their needs: social, cultural and learning needs, goals for life...**

### **Youthpass in European Voluntary service**

**Youthpass is a European recognition tool for non-formal and informal learning in youth work.** With Youthpass the Evs volunteers can describe what they have done and show what they have learnt. Youthpass is more than a certificate, it is a process which takes time and commitment both from the volunteer and the mentor: with their dialogue around the volunteer learning experience, they'll shape the final content of the youthpass. For this reason the 3rd part of the youthpass, which is dedicated to the self-assessment of the learning from the volunteer is signed both by the volunteer and the mentor.

Youthpass is a Europe-wide validation instrument for non-formal learning in the youth field so it can contribute to strengthening the social recognition of youth work. Making visible and validating key competences through a certificate, Youthpass finally aims at supporting the employability of young people and youth workers.

For more information on youthpass process please have a look to <https://www.youthpass.eu>

# Role of the Mentor in the timeline of the mentoring process (Receiving organization - RO)

## E.V.S Planning and Preparation Phase

Get to know the volunteer: who will be your mentee, find as much information about him/her via social media, skype, CV...	Communicate with the volunteer about receiving/ sending organization/ the living conditions: lodging place, culture of the city	Let the volunteer be in contact with previous volunteer(s) (if any)	Prepare a document about the hosting city/country, its culture and provide a map listing all interesting points.	Prepare a document along with the RO about all means of transportations available (advantages, costs, working hours...) and a map from "home" to working place	Have full information about the project and discuss it with volunteer to reduce the gap between expectation and reality	Discuss about expectations, fears, skills, motivations, learning objectives and the learning style of the volunteer.
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## E.V.S Implementation Phase

**E.V.S Implementation Phase**

First 2 weeks

Every month

**E.V.S Implementation Phase**

First 2 weeks

Every month



Make an introductory phase (IP), welcome the volunteer, make a connection upon arrival (i.e. organize a welcome event so the volunteer get in touch with the mentor, team and other volunteers)

Getting to know the HO and the country, (i.e. be with the volunteer during his first relation with the new city (public transportation, work place...))

Provide a list of "in case of emergency" numbers

Propose leisure activities during weekends, inform the volunteer about local events outside works as social support as well as to help out in language skills

Work continuously with the volunteer on the learning goals and personal and professional achievements. Start to ask him/her to reflect on simple learning achievements he manage to get.

Present the role of each person involved in the project. Share Receiving. Organisation and the mentor's expectations, and its role.

At the beginning of the IP make a learning contract with the volunteer. (What does the volunteer want to learn? Approach he would like to have, how can I, being a mentor, help? Draft a template about some learning points, reflections, success stories, challenges...)

Promote teamwork: make available channel of communication among the team, help the volunteer to find his place, encourage him to express himself, empower him to take initiative and be proactive

Participate in the meetings with the responsible of the project/supervisor and the volunteer to evaluate the project and adapt the activities accordingly.

## E.V.S Evaluation Phase

### Last month

Work on filling out the Youthpass form with the volunteer (You should do it before the volunteer come back home)

Prepare with volunteer a planning of the follow up activities and strategy for future plans.

Prepare a framework extracted from the lessons learnt to welcome a new volunteer

Project evaluation meeting with the volunteer and ROP/supervisor: Evaluate the project, the learning and living experience (lodging place, transportation, cultural, personal and professional learning)

Find out how the volunteer is doing, personal and professional development, does he/ she needs help for follow up ( through Skype, e mails,)

Ask about the future plans (transferability of knowledge, experience...)

Ask the volunteer to send inspiring, challenging and learning stories about EVS after reflecting on his/ her experience and returning back home

# Role of the Mentor in the timeline of the mentoring process (Sending Organization)

## Pre-project

- Have a general introductory meeting about the Receiving organisation, the mentor and full details on the project (theme, role, field of interest)
- Appraise Volunteer's assessment (needs, skills, expectations) and define together the goals setting and achievement: the 8 key competencies)
- Provide Cultural awareness on the visiting country Geopolitical situation and climate of the hosting country
- Give Contact information and procedure in case of emergency. Explain to the volunteer the insurance services offered by the Evs project<sup>1</sup>.
- Provide full information on the roles of the RoPs and the mentors (a volunteer has to have full awareness of the role of each person so that he knows to whom to refer during his stay)
- Increase the volunteer's awareness on his/her Rights and Responsibilities (Privacy issues, advice volunteers on what to share with the hosting NGO and what not be shared)

## During the project

- Regular communication with Receiving organization in order to stay in the loop.
- Regular contact and follow up with the volunteer in order to be acquainted with the development of the project and his goal setting at the beginning.
- Regular communication with the volunteer to follow up on his learning objectives, challenges and achievements.
- Reporting (i.e. midterm report on the progress of the project and the volunteers' effectiveness and contribution to its success, or obstacles that stand in the way of the volunteers' learning process)
- Provide support on finalizing the Youth pass

## Post project

- Valorization of the project ( support and follow up on the implementation of the learning experience within the volunteers' local society)
- Creating social activities for the volunteer in order to transform his / her learning experience to other volunteers.
- Celebrate with the volunteer and team members the EVS experience (i.e organize an event within the NGO or with other NGOs )
- Provide guidance to the volunteer about further training and mobility opportunities, strategies/opportunities to find a job
- Offer the volunteer opportunities to cooperate with the sending organization (e.g. promotion of Evs at local level, becoming mentor for future Evs volunteers, volunteering in local youth work activities etc.)



*Before and at the beginning of the EVS period,  
is a Personal Support to prepare and help the  
volunteer integrate in the new environment*

*Meanwhile or during the EVS period,  
is a Support to carry out a self-reflection on the learning objectives  
and outcomes of the EVS activity (through the use of Youthpass)*



*At the end and after the EVS period,  
is a support to reintegrate the volunteer  
into his/ her home community*

**Challenges faced by the mentor and ways to overcome them: ( 2 different symbols for challenges and ways and for the above it's a timeline so it's up to u how u can make it active during and after )**

"Even though mentoring relationship involves two people where one is supporting or guiding the other and in case of good mentoring they both get a unique self-development experience"

Before coming to and when reaching a host country every volunteer has to undergo a various "challenging" situation that he/she will face during the EVS. There can be different types of challenges:



**people-focused (based on emotions and feelings, personal attack),**



**issue-focused, personal differences (values, perceptions, expectations)**



**informational deficiencies (misinterpretations, no communication, conclusions based on past experience)**



**Environmental stress (cultural, location...)**

**All of these types can be on different levels and they are part of the EVS cycle.**

Thus, EVS mentors are humans like any other, thus it is quite normal that sometimes the stress levels go up when being involved in a mentoring relationship. However, all stress isn't bad. Stress can indicate change in us; help us focus on the task at hand, and try to transform the challenges into a learning opportunity.

Being an EVS mentor is a demanding task and one should never underestimate its importance and value. When you have encouraged the volunteer to take a positive step to self-improvement, you deserve to feel proud of yourself, celebrate and give yourself a treat or reward.

Create your own personal rewards basket to motivate yourself!

## Some tips for overcoming challenges

### With the NGO

Communicate your needs and expectations from the NGO

Speak your mind and be transparent

Get informed beforehand on EVS project and your role and responsibilities

Be proactive in finding solutions and some things we cannot change best to do is to deal with them in a constructive way

Do not impose your personal norms but help yourself and the NGO's responsible clarify the situation

Develop continuously skills like communication, problem solving, active listening and negotiation

### With the team and RoP

Carry out personal reflections. Have a conversation with yourself. Ask power questions

Have a mentor or coach for yourself. This is a good way to exchange ideas and get an extra outlook on situation you are facing

Be active listener and do not offer solutions directly

Encourage to talk with the "other party" (RoP or team member) and try to meet in a neutral fearless atmosphere

### With the volunteer

Prepare before meeting the volunteer recall the previous session: topics, agreements and plans.

Use open questions to encourage the volunteer to reflect his/her experience, problems.

Encourage the volunteer to taking challenges; tell the truth if the volunteer avoids understanding it.

Posing questions helps the volunteer and yourself find the roots of conflict. Give facts and share your opinion of the situation/problem

Identify the negative consequences and feelings that result.

Find an environment, in which the volunteer and yourself can speak freely

**"Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can."**

*John Wesley*

#### Abbreviations

**EVS** – European Voluntary Service  
**RO** – Receiving organization in EVS  
**SO** – Sending organization in EVS

**CO** – Coordinating organization in EVS  
**RoP** – Responsible of the Project  
**IP** – Introductory Phase

## Justine Abi Saad

"Facilitate change and empower people to take ownership of their own sustainable development processes through a participatory and needs based approach" is a key element in my work.

Program officer for civil peace program at GIZ - Lebanon. Trainer and Facilitator on Peace-building and Conflict Transformation for National and International organization as well as representative for SALTO youth Euromed.

I also delivered trainings in different regions in Lebanon for Lebanese and Palestinians with World Vision, Search for Common Ground, OTI and the Arab Network for Human Rights & Citizenship Education. Internationally, she has provided trainings, coaching and mentoring for UNDP, UNFPA, YMCA- Ireland, Ministry of Youth- Tunisia, EU Delegation-Tunisia, Pax Christi- Holland. Furthermore, I have created tools on minority rights and conflict transformation

## Saro Rossi

Rosario (Saro) Rossi born and live in East part of Sicily, Italy. He's a free-lance trainer and consultant at local and international level in the field of youth work, cultural diversity, active citizenship, recognition of non formal learning . He's involved in European Voluntary Service since 2001, first as mentor in receiving and sending organisations and after as trainer in Evs training and evaluation cycle. He also run several national and international training courses for mentors and responsible of Evs projects.

He worked for several institutions such as Salto RCs, the British Council, different National Agencies of Youth in Action/Erasmus + programme, several local authorities and Ngos .

In the last years he focus his attention in supporting volunteers, youth and social workers of different ages to assess and valorise competences and skills acquired trough non formal learning.

Detailed profile on

<http://www.salto-youth.net/tools/toy/rosario-rossi.57>

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