

Good Practices



SALTO-YOUTH  
EUROMED  
RESOURCE CENTRE



Erasmus+

# EVS Adventure Travel Book

Learning  
and practical support  
for EVS volunteers in  
Euromed adventure!

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## Introduction

Dear volunteer, this Practical guide is made for YOU ! It aims to support you during the various stages of your EVS journey within the EuroMediterranean cooperation!

The Erasmus+ programme offers young people the chance to make a difference through the European Voluntary Service (EVS). The EVS gives young people the opportunity to develop their personal skills and make a contribution through full-time voluntary work in a foreign country within or outside the EU. It aims to develop solidarity, mutual understanding and tolerance among young people, while contributing to strengthening social cohesion and promoting active citizenship.

This publication is specially dedicated to the volunteers who will carry out their service within the South Mediterranean cooperation.

Once your project has been approved, take time to read this guide. It will give you an overview of the world of EVS : it contains informations about the EVS framework, the roles of each actor, your rights and duties and provides you with different ideas to give you a rich learning experience during your month of voluntary service. The guide also offers you space for taking notes. Carry it with you throughout your EVS program! By the end of your project you'll have all your amazing experiences gathered here! Do it!

We wish you an unforgettable EVS experience in South Mediterranean countries !



## European Voluntary Service Within South Mediterranean countries

European Voluntary Service (EVS) in southern mediterranean countries neighbouring EU includes Egypt, Tunisia, Lebanon, Morocco, Algeria, Jordan, Israel and the Palestinian Authority. EVS in this particular region provides a great opportunity to build a common ground for youth from both shores of the mediterranean sea in order to develop intercultural cooperation and dialogue. It will help you to better understand other cultures and develop new personal competencies within the youth field.

In the last few years, and especially since the Arab Spring, there has been an increasing focus on young people. In these countries they are considered as change makers and also potential future leaders. In this context, EVS in Southern Mediterranean countries became a tool that has a crucial role in the learning process of youth and an important factor in the development of a multicultural world.

What is special about the EVS in Southern Mediterranean countries? It presents a chance to develop new personal skills, knowledge and attitudes through a remarkable cultural experience. This experience enables the volunteers to have a deeper understanding of social, linguistic and cultural diversity.

EVS project is a space for exchanging ideas, good practices and improve mutual understanding and cross-reflection between countries bordering the Mediterranean. Through this mutual exchange EVS benefits both volunteers and local communities by :

- raising intercultural awareness and openness,
- increasing opportunities to build international networking,
- promoting youth mobility between the two sides of the Mediterranean,
- improving foreign language competences,
- insuring an active participation in the civil society.

*Now, we invite you to travel with us and discover  
the different planets of the EVS Galaxy!*

ENJOY

## Before leaving!

### 1) YOU & your Sending Organisation (SO)

As a new volunteer, your first source of information is your Sending Organisation (SO) in your home country. It plays a crucial role in the preparation of the volunteer. Your SO has to provide you with a mentor who will be in charge of your project. Your SO and your mentor will support you from the preparation until the final evaluation of the EVS project.

Your Receiving Organisation (RO) will also provide you with a mentor. That means that you will have two!

Before leaving, make sure you have a clear relationship with your SO and your RO!

Together you should discuss and agree:

- the responsibilities and expectations of each actor,
- your activities,
- the venue, transfers, accommodation
- your linguistic support

The most important point in the preparation work with your SO and RO mentors will be to learn more about EVS in general and your project in particular. This includes your activities, your RO, your accommodation, your motivations and learning objectives. Don't forget to do research on your hosting country including cultural and political issues.

### **EVS framework**

**Before leaving make sure that your SO informed you about the following points:**

- The EVS Info Kit for the volunteers. It is a very important tool for your preparation. Be aware of the EVS Charter. Here you will find the core values and quality standards. For both documents, click here: [http://ec.europa.eu/youth/tools/evs-info-kit\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/youth/tools/evs-info-kit_en.htm)
- Visa! You will leave the Schengen Space. That means that you will need a valid passport and a visa that allows you to enter and to stay in your hosting country. Often it takes a lot of time to get your visa! When you have arrived, you should change your visa to a resident's permit.

These points are really technical. You absolutely need the support of your SO AND RO!!

The website of your Ministry of Foreign Affairs can be the first step of your "investigations"! Make sure to allow enough time for researching information and maybe applying for a new passport!

- Your health insurance: every EVS volunteer must be enrolled into the Group Insurance Plan for EVS volunteers. The name of your insurance is « MSH INSURANCE ». Your SO is responsible for your enrolment. This enrolment must be done before your departure and will cover the duration of your EVS. Don't leave without your insurance number!

MSH Insurance includes also a third-party liability in private life. An insurance guide including all the information on the cover and support provided, as well as instructions on the online enrolment process, is available at [www.europeanbenefits.com](http://www.europeanbenefits.com)

For the projects approved after mid 2015 the insurance is CIGNA and the website is [www.cignahealthbenefits.com](http://www.cignahealthbenefits.com)

- Practical aspects within EVS: what about your pocket money, money for food and local travel, your accommodation, the reimbursement of travel costs...
- Role of the main actors: SO, RO, Responsible of Project and mentor.
- Role of the National Agencies of Erasmus + Program. Don't forget to take their email address!
- In the weeks after your arrival, you will take part in an "on arrival training" (OAT). Half way through your EVS, you will join the "Mid Term Evaluation" (MET<sup>2</sup>). In the south mediterranean countries Salto-Youth Euromed is responsible for organising them. Please have a look at [www.salto-youth.net/euromed](http://www.salto-youth.net/euromed)
- What is the difference between voluntary work, travelling abroad to work formally in an organisation or travelling for fun.

## 2) YOU & your Receiving Organisation (RO)

Remember to get in contact with your RO in good time before you start your EVS. A close relationship with them will allow you all to be clear about your expectations, concerns and responsibilities.

These are the things you should ask your RO about BEFORE you go:

- what kind of organisations it is, its goal, field of work and activities, experience with EVS projects.
- the hosting country: as everywhere, the South Mediterranean countries have their specific traditions, religion, cultures, food, climate and suitable clothing. Ask your RO if there's anything else you need to know before you go<sup>3</sup>.
- If you have any medical needs, allergies, dietary restrictions tell you RO! You need to be sure that your drugs are available in your hosting country! If not, bring them with you

## 3) YOU & your EVS project

Once the EVS project is approved, the Activity Agreement must be signed by yourself, the SO and the RO. Please make sure that you read it carefully before leaving!

### **The EVS Activity Agreement contains :**

- EVS project details
- rights, responsibilities and duties of the volunteer
- learning outcomes
- grant allocation

### **In addition, you must check:**

- details about the project, your activities and the target group
- the place where you will be based
- special things to know about the country: cultural, political and economical situation
- the previous EVS experience of your RO (if any).  
Maybe you can get in contact with previous volunteers to get more practical information about the project?!

## Something to think about

The situation that you will find in your EVS will probably be really different from your previous life. Your life will certainly change ! Think carefully about the following points :

Your needs and  
anxieties?

Your expectations:

What can you  
gain personally  
from your EVS?

What can you  
offer to your  
project? ..

What kind of  
difficulties can you  
imagine? ..





Being aware of the above points will help you to clarify your goals and make the most of your EVS!

Don't be worried about travelling to your host country! It is a great chance to live an experience in the South Mediterranean! Your SO and RO will be always be by your side to :

- support you during your intercultural learning process
- help you to overcome personal and cultural challenges
- provide you with tools for avoiding conflict and coping with crises<sup>4</sup>.



4- Refer to the chapter about « Intercultural learning » and « Challenges and tips »

## Finally arrived!!

## With your Receiving Organisation (RO)

In order to start well in your EVS, take time to observe what happens around you. Ask questions to be clear about the different aspects of your project.

Check out the following things:

- meet your colleagues, your mentor, your Responsible of Project (RoP), other volunteers...
- visit the places where you'll carry out your volunteering activities
- take some time to discover your new environment, where are the supermarket, cinema, park, bakery, places to meet young people...
- ask for more practical information about local currency, work place, local transport...
- are there any no-go-areas or any social/cultural/traditional restrictions to be aware of ?

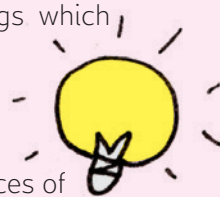
Important things to do once you settle in:

- have a good talk with your mentor and RoP, express your expectations and anxieties, your learning objectives.
- after observing what is going on around you, think about what you can do to contribute.



## Something to think about

During your first days everything will be new and different. Some things will please you, some may not. Don't worry and don't judge things straight away. With time, you will adapt and get used to your new life. You may have the opportunity to introduce your own way of doing things which may benefit those around you.



Keep an open mind and be prepared to listen to the experiences of existing volunteers or other members of international community but always try to form your own ideas and opinions !



Try to learn the local language ! Even if it's easier in the beginning to speak french or english... It will help you to get more involved in the social life, meet local people... You don't have to speak fluently, but knowing some words will be helpfull.

Set yourself some challenges : buy some bread in arabic after your first week, introduce yourself to your neighbours after two weeks... and so on !



During the period of your project, make sure you have regular meetings with your mentor and the RoP to review your progress, evaluate your work and discuss the contribution of each actor...

In order to improve your personal action plan, think about the following points (you can do it alone or with your mentor) :



Where are you now ?



What have you achieved so far ?



Is there anything you need to improve on?  
Anything that is going well ?

## With your Sending Organisation (RO)

Keep in touch with your SO to follow up :

- the development of your project, activities, expectations...
- your learning process, new competences, achievements, challenges...
- in the case of conflict, obstacles or difficulties, always ask for their support !

Reports

- monthly reports to update your SO about the progress of your EVS project.
- Midterm report
- Final Report



The Erasmus + Programme has issued an EVS INFO KIT<sup>5</sup> that contains the chapter « What to expect from EVS ». Here are some of the most important points.

*What you should expect from your sending organisation (SO) and receiving organisation (RO) is :*

- ▶ to receive clear information about your EVS project, about your tasks, accommodation, training and support
- ▶ participation in EVS is free of charge except for a contribution to travel costs
- ▶ safe and clean accommodation, insurance (MSH), food (meals or food money), pocket money, local transport
- ▶ help from both organisations in obtaining your visa
- ▶ 2 consecutive free days/week (unless arranged differently and explicitly stated in the Activity Agreement)

*What your SO and RO will expect from you is :*

- ▶ to inform them about dates of arrival
- ▶ to provide them with accurate information about health-related issues
- ▶ to sign the Activity Agreement and read the approved grant application
- ▶ to read carefully the insurance-related information (MSH)<sup>6</sup> or Cigna Assurance
- ▶ to respect the rules of your RO and your host country
- ▶ to respect the weekly working time – between 30 and 38 hours
- ▶ to accept the role of the mentor as person responsible for you

5- Click here : [http://ec.europa.eu/youth/tools/evs-info-kit\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/youth/tools/evs-info-kit_en.htm)  
6- [http://global.msh-intl.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=93&lang=en](http://global.msh-intl.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=93&lang=en)  
[http://global.msh-intl.com/images/european\\_commission/Guide\\_8\\_EVS\\_english2.pdf](http://global.msh-intl.com/images/european_commission/Guide_8_EVS_english2.pdf)  
or [www.cignahealthbenefits.com](http://www.cignahealthbenefits.com)



**As a last resort, you have the right to leave the project after discussion with your SO and RO.**

- ▶ 2 days of holiday per month
- ▶ mentor : to meet him/her regularly. Your RO mentor helps you to get integrated in the organisation, local community and with administrative issues
- ▶ clear learning opportunities and personal support in your learning process (Youthpass)
- ▶ linguistic support : your RO has to provide you with linguistic support. It can be formal or informal and the duration depends on your needs and those of the project.
- ▶ to receive a Youthpass certificate if you ask for it
- ▶ to keep the RO informed about your whereabouts during your EVS
- ▶ to take an active role in setting up your EVS project
- ▶ to keep in contact with your SO when you are back at home : to evaluate the overall project with your SO and complete the final report.

# Compromise & negotiation

Above are the common rules for EVS projects all over the world. They give a general framework which has to be adapted to your personal situation. On one hand, you have to be aware of the needs and expectations of your SO and RO. On the other, SO and RO have to be aware of your needs and expectations. That means, as you will shortly understand, that "compromise" and "negotiation" are the key words of the whole process!

## Some good tips for negotiation



*To reach a compromise, you may have to*

**Be** aware of your personal needs and expectations and know how to express them.

**Think** about your RO/local community, their needs and expectations concerning yourself.

**Try** to find overlapping points and common interests.

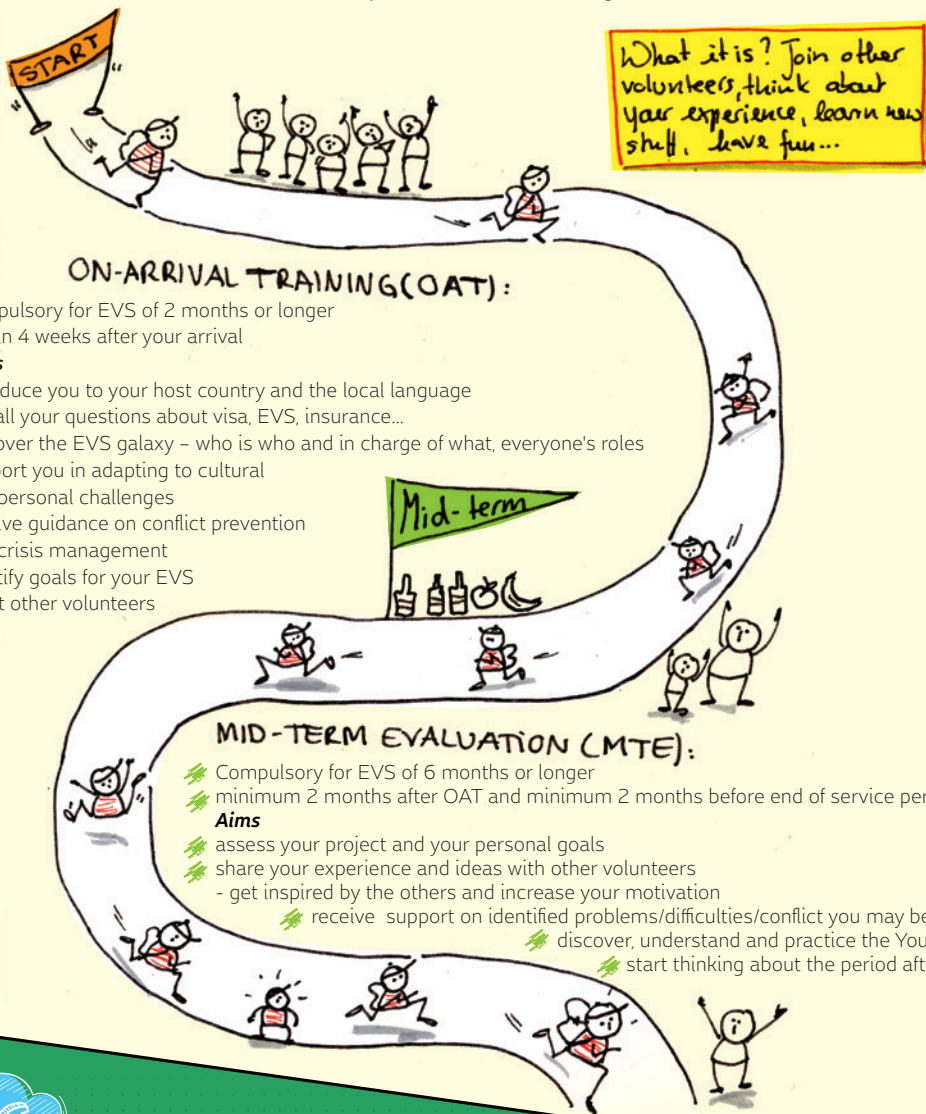
**Ask** for a meeting with close person (mentor?). It should be a person who is not directly concerned with your request. Discuss the points with him/her.

**The last step** is to meet your RO. Explain your point of view, listen to what they think about the situation and make constructive and concrete suggestions to improve the situation.



## Training

In the South Mediterranean countries, the OAT and the MTE are organised directly by Salto-Youth Euromed. The trainings are organised on in the country of your service or in another country following the number of volunteers and the different arrival and departures time. As much as possible the training will follow these criteria:

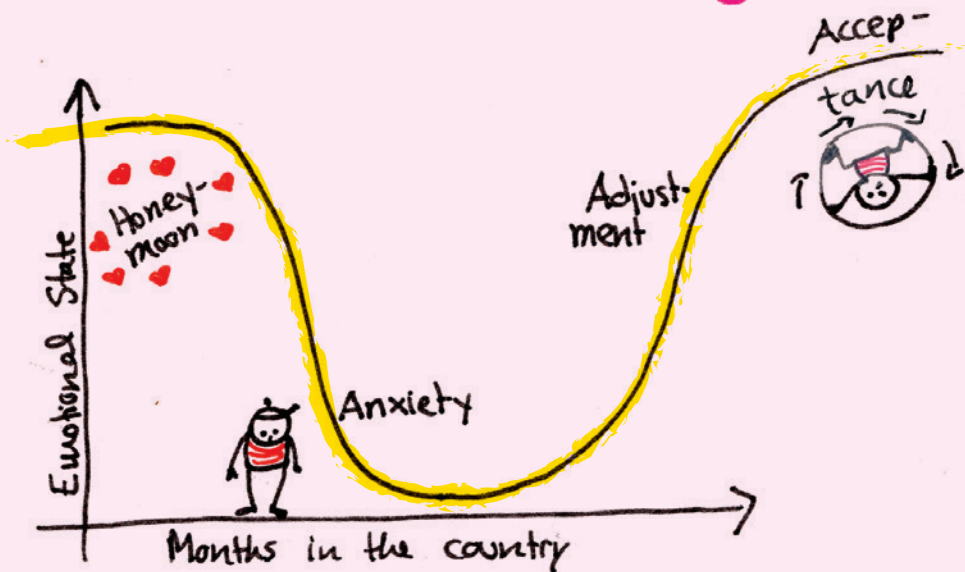




# Intercultural learning

Intercultural learning is a practical process of acquiring new knowledge and skills while living in a new context or culture, with people from different backgrounds. Being confronted with other cultures makes us reflect more on our own culture and also ourselves.

## Intercultural learning steps

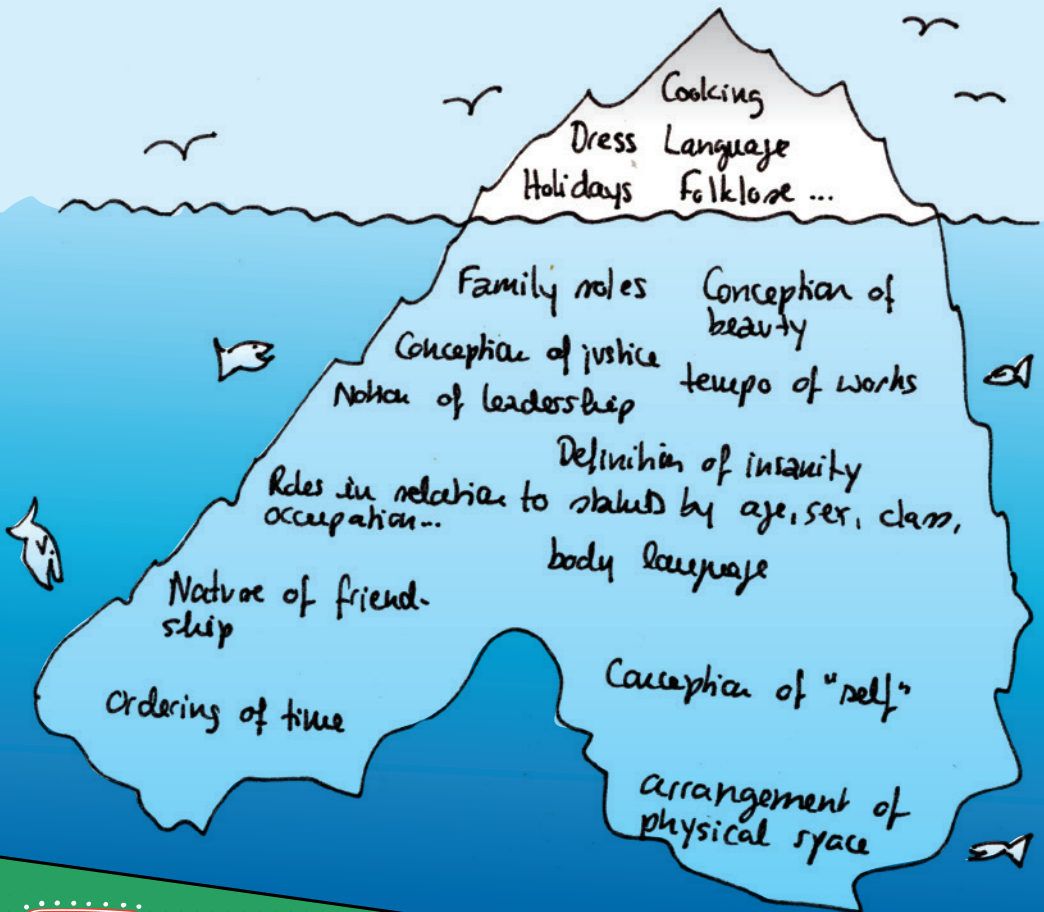


### Impact of the Intercultural learning :

- ✦ a better understanding of yourself and your values,
- ✦ a better communication between youth from different backgrounds,
- ✦ a tolerant attitude towards the cultural diversity in societies,
- ✦ an active participation in the building of peace and mutual understanding of each other.

# Iceberg Model

Before going any further in intercultural learning, you should think about « culture ». What does it mean ? What is a culture ? You can imagine culture like an iceberg: only a small part is visible while the greater part under the waterline is invisible. That doesn't mean that it doesn't exist ! It is even the most «dangerous » part... Have a look !



## Intercultural aims of EVS :

- ▶ increase your positive awareness of other cultures and lifestyles,
- ▶ support dialogue and intercultural encounters with people from different backgrounds and cultures,
- ▶ help to prevent and combat prejudice, racism and all attitudes leading to social exclusion,
- ▶ develop a sense of tolerance and understanding of diversity in all its dimensions.

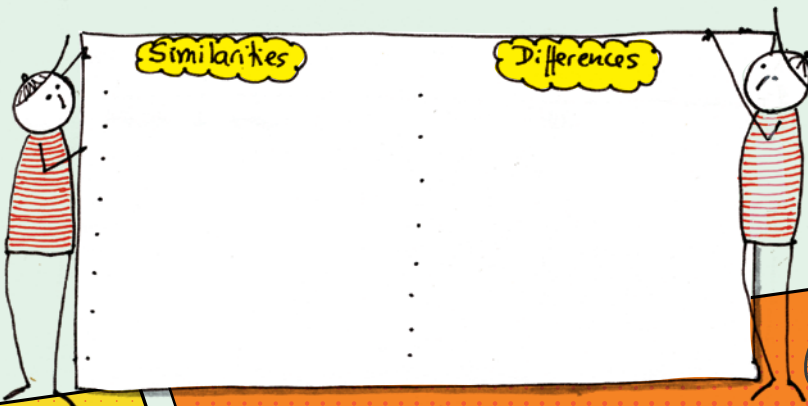
## What can help you during your intercultural experience ?

- ▶ Openness to others, active respect for differences
- ▶ Knowledge and awareness about your host country, its culture and language
- ▶ Skills in dealing with cultural diversity

## Something to think about

The cultural aspect in the Southern Mediterranean countries may be very different from your home country and will certainly deeply influence your EVS.

Take some moments to think about the main differences but also about similarities between your home and your host country!



## Southern Mediterranean countries specificities

Living in South Mediterranean societies is very different from living in Europe. Culture, traditions and religion have a bigger impact on the social and daily life.

You should be aware of these specificities before travelling. The information and questions below may help you to understand better and reflect on the situation. It will also provide you with some tips and ideas to facilitate your stay.

***Don't forget to make your own observations, to be curious and open minded. Imagine that you have a new pair of eyes, which help you see things like they are.***

## Social aspects



Relationships between men and women may be different from what you are used to. As in Europe, but in a more visible way, responsibilities and roles depend on the gender. The authority in a family is related to age and gender. That's why the father usually rules the family. You may also discover that there are big differences between urban and rural populations and between the different communities.

Try to discover the complexity and diversity of your host country with an open mind... Think about the dresscode! It is not necessary to be dressed, to speak, act and be like local people but try to understand what may shock your environment.

# Extreme hospitality



Although it's a positive thing, sometimes people are insistant. Declining an invitation can be embarassing. Saying NO will sometimes create disappointment or misunderstandings. Try to explain kindly why you can not accept the invitation.

But also remember, means training your arabic !



# Concept of time

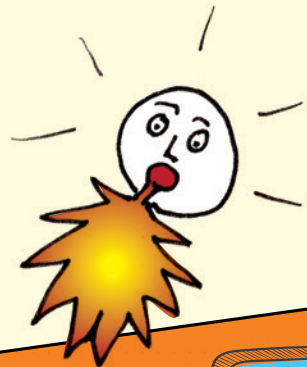


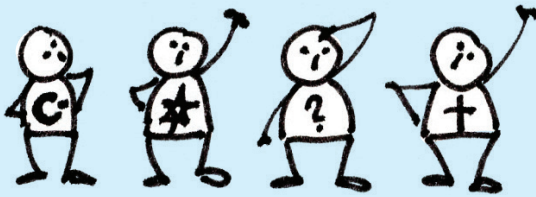
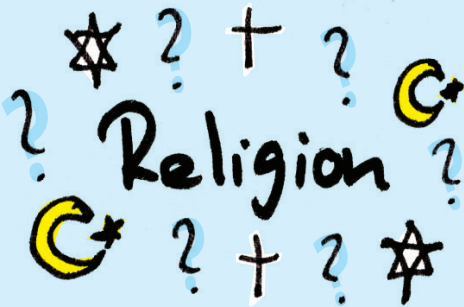
The concept of being on time is more relaxed than in European cultures. Being late at an appointment is frequent. Be prepared for that and take it into account.

# Food

It may be very spicy and hot and may cause you some digestive issues if you're not used to it.

When ordering food in restaurants or if you're invited, be clear in advance that you can not eat as spicy as locals do !





Religion has a very important place in these societies. You can observe it in daily life, the way people behave and dress. Living in a society where most of the actions are based on religion will make your experience very different from European countries.

Try to understand the role of religion in society and avoid discussing religious topics in public. It is a delicate subject to talk about. Ask serious questions for a better understanding and avoid comments or criticism.

Although religious rules are strict some people may break them in private. They never show or talk about it in public (ex : sexual relationships, alcohol...).

## Please respect their choice!

### Geopolitical situation

The Southern Mediterranean countries have been very influenced by Arab Spring and the changes that it has caused. Some of the results are :

- ⚡ political conflict and instability
- ⚡ economical crisis
- ⚡ external threats from neighbour countries in civil war.

In some of these countries there are royal regimes or very rigid governmental systems, in others establishing democracy is still in process. Political issues can be really sensitive. Avoid talking about politics in public or with people you don't trust/know.

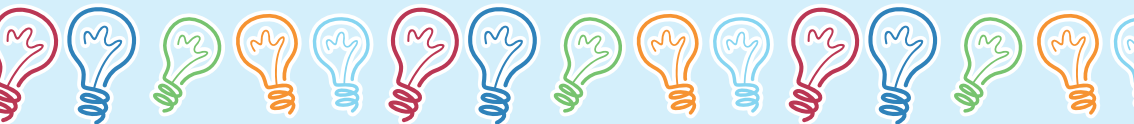




People usually know everything about each other in local communities. As a foreigner, people will be curious to know more about you, what you do and why you are there. Take advantage of their curiosity to meet new people, to understand more about your host country... But, sometimes, this interest about you can be difficult to support.

Try to preserve what you consider as your secret garden !  
You don't have to share everything with everybody !

## Conclusion



As everywhere, there are sensitive topics that can not be easily discussed with local people at the beginning of your relationship. You should be curious without offending. Ask questions for a better understanding instead of being too affirmative. Chat with people about their lives... So you will learn to read the context and analyse which question/behaviour is appropriate or not !





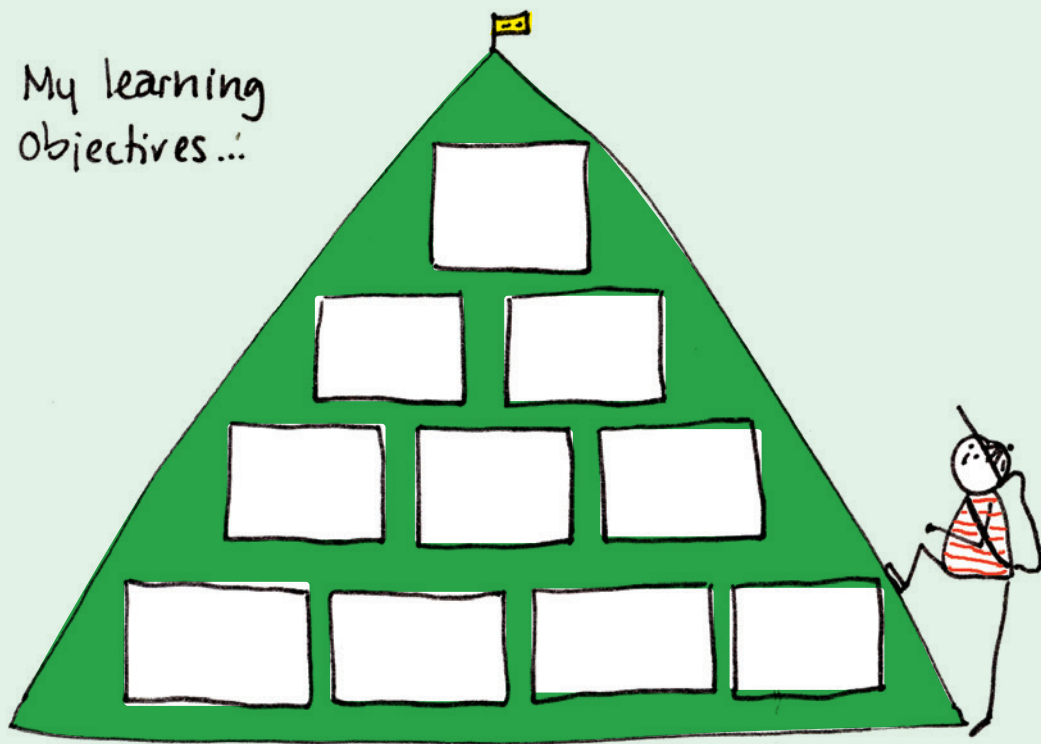


For the next step, think about HOW you learned these new things... by listening ? Or reading ? Or doing ? Or imitating ? Or trying on your own... ?

Did you noticed similarities? Some ways of learning that you use more than others ? Try to find out what your way of learning is. Share your reflection with your mentor and/or colleagues. It may help you in the future to be more efficient in learning.

We would like to invite you to a last exercise. Have you already thought about WHAT you want to learn during your stay abroad ? Try to find 10 points. Then, think about what is the most and what is the least important. Then, fill in the following drawing ! You can use the pyramide during a meeting with your mentor to explain your personal learning objectives.

My learning  
Objectives...



## Youthpass in key words

To support your learning process, you can use the Youthpass. You will find the main information about Youthpass in the following table!

### What is it?

- # a certificate not a diploma
- # not compulsory
- # your RO must give you the possibility to do it (if you want).
- # A self-evaluation doesn't mean evaluating all alone, but with your mentor's feed-back.
- # officially adopted in 2007

### What is it for?

- # acknowledging your skills
- # recognising of non-formal learning
- # supporting the employability of young people
- # strengthening the social recognition of youth work

### Who writes it? When?

- # you! with your mentor
- # all along your EVS.
- # try to take notes about your activities, your initiatives, your progress...

Take some time to have a look on this page:

<https://www.youthpass.eu/en/youthpass/>

Do you realise how much you will learn during the coming month? And did you think about how important it will be to remember all your learnings? Working with the Youthpass will allow you to put words on your experience, to explain what you did. But it will also help you to enhance your competences in general and to get you to think about their transferability to other sectors.

Youthpass won't give you a job, but it will increase your chances to get one because it will underline the difference between you and other candidates...



**So don't forget to ask your mentor to start working with you after mid-term evaluation!**



## Challenges & tips

Don't look at challenges as an obstacle, but take every difficulty as an opportunity to learn !



### Language issues

Make a small list of common words that are often used in the daily life of your hosting community. Try to learn how to greet people and ask simple questions...



### Different expectations on both sides

- ⚡ Too many/not enough activities
- ⚡ Your Receiving Organisation's (RO) expectations don't match your interests

You have your own expectations and needs that need to be heard and understood by your RO. At the same time, RO and Sending Organisation (SO) invest a lot of time, energy and resources in your EVS. Therefore they expect a similar level of respect and commitment from you. In case of divergences, try to be clear about your expectations and interest. Share them with your RO and SO. Together, you will find a compromise which is ok for them AND you !



### Living conditions

It is difficult for you to adjust to your new living conditions ? It's hard to support the differences between your former and your actual life ?

Share your feelings with other volunteers and your mentor. Maybe you

can change some little things in your accommodation which will remind you of home. Think about the positive points of your new living conditions !

## **Feeling a bit lost and/OR homesick**

This is a very common issue ! Don't worry about it ! Continue doing activities you used to do back home. Join sport clubs, ask about any social events around, join meetings with other volunteers. And especially keep your mind open to make new friends !

## **Problems with the other volunteers OR with your mentor**

Talk with him/her calmly and explain your point of view and needs. Together, clarify the limits of the relationship. If things don't get better, talk to the Responsible of Project (RoP) and to your SO. If it concerns your mentor : if you don't find a common agreement, you can also deepen your relationship with another person in your RO and ask him/her to support you.

## **Health issues**

If you feel bad/ill or if you have any allergies, tell people around you ! If they don't know about it, they can not help you. If you take special drugs, ask if there are available in your host country. If necessary, bring them with you for the whole stay. For more information about the health insurance in EVS, check MSH website and the MSH volunteers guide :

[http://global.msh-intl.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article  
&id=93&lang=en](http://global.msh-intl.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=93&lang=en)

[http://global.msh-intl.com/images/european\\_commission/Guide\\_8\\_EV  
S\\_english2.pdf](http://global.msh-intl.com/images/european_commission/Guide_8_EV_S_english2.pdf)



## Different attitudes, beliefs, traditions

Before you start your EVS, enquire about cultural aspects, history, importance of the religion, social conditions of your host country. Knowledge helps to understand and accept differences !

The cultural aspect is very important in each society ! Try to understand how your host country works and how to adapt without losing your own identity. Take time to discuss about difficult points with your mentor and the other volunteers.



## Something to think about..

Take a few moments to think about your personal main challenges ! What was/is really difficult for you ? In case of ever existing difficulties : who could help you to overcome them ?

Your main challenges ?

Who could help you??

Don't forget ! Self development requires working in the existing environment and dealing with it, not completely changing it.

## Bye Bye EVS!

The successful project is the one which leaves a positive impact on yourself, on the hosting community and maybe, in a smaller scale, on the local society. Evaluation and follow-up play a crucial role in order to reflect about the past and learn from it to build the future.

A good evaluation won't only be good just for you, but also for those who come after you !

## Things to be done before leaving your RO

- ✂ Plan enough time with your mentor for the evaluation of your work, your activities, the Youthpass and the follow-up ! During the evaluation meeting with your mentor and the Responsible of Project (RoP), focus on the following points :
- ✂ your learning experience : your achievements, impact on the personal and professional level. Don't forget that your mentor has to sign your Youthpass !
- ✂ You and your RO – what went well ? What can be improved ?
- ✂ Discuss together what would have made your first weeks in the project easier ?
- ✂ Follow up – how can your action be transformed into something sustainable ?

## Things to be done with your SO

Once you are back at home, meet your SO! Together take some time and:

- ✂ make a presentation on your EVS experience abroad to the other members of your SO. Explain how it benefited you.
- ✂ tell them if you are interested in further trainings, local volunteering activities etc.
- ✂ think about how you could create local events to transmit your new learning to local youth.
- ✂ set up sessions with other organisations where you can promote EVS.

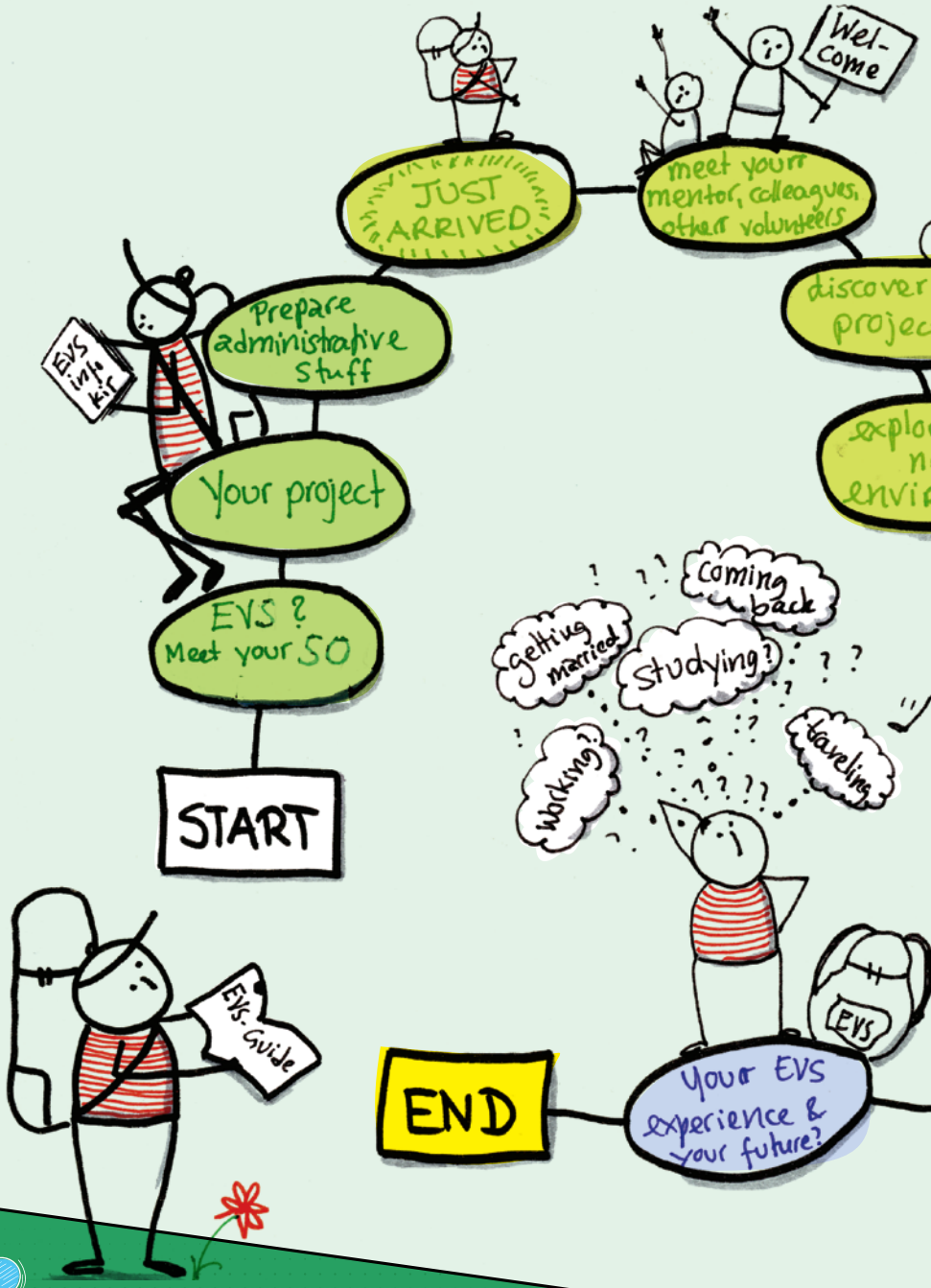
*The EVS impact never stops  
at the end of the project.*

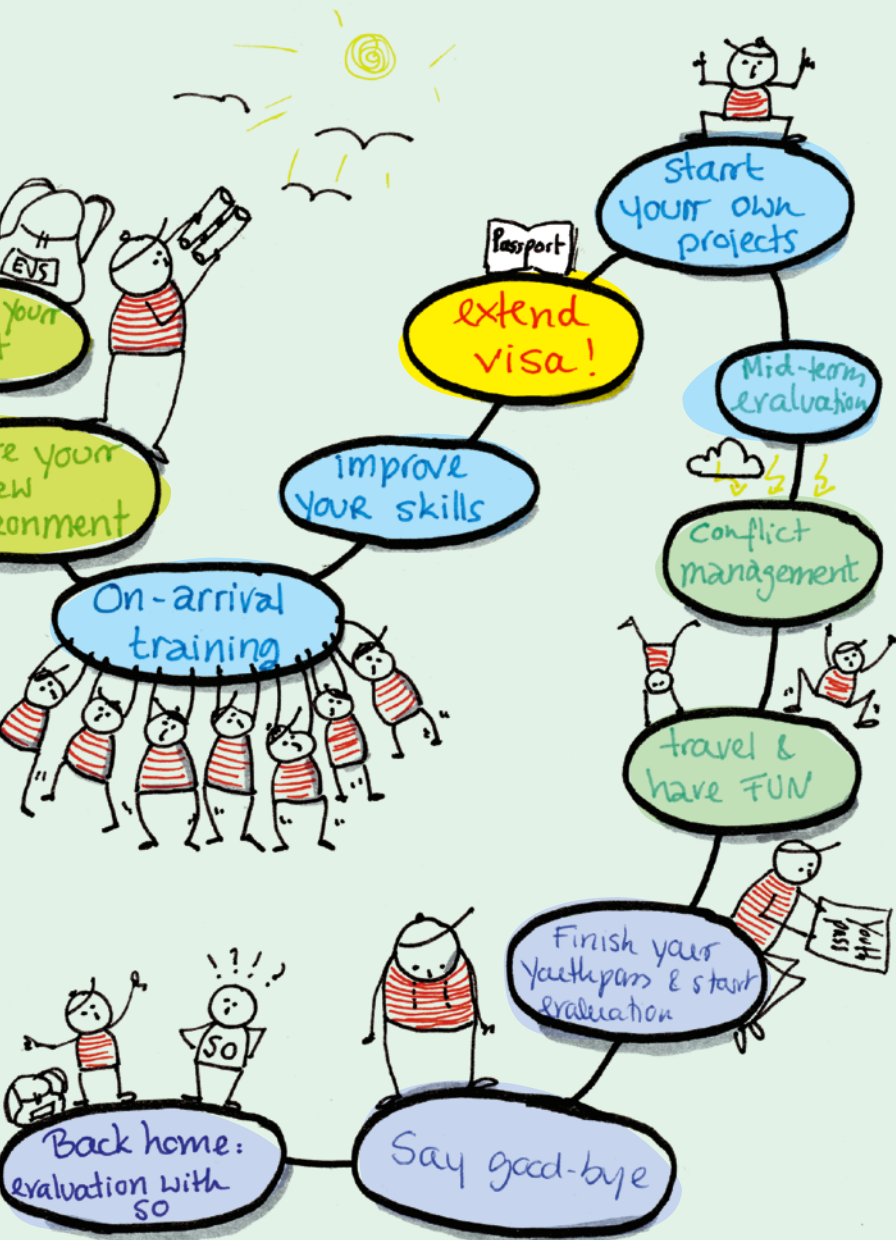
*The sustainability  
is one of its keys of success.*













## SALTO-YOUTH EuroMed Resource Centre

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