

Erasmus+ Key Action 2

**Skills and Competences for a Global World:
Findings from the Impact Study**

July 2019



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List of abbreviations

EVS	European Voluntary Service
HCO	Host coordinating organisation
HO	Host organisation
ICYE	International Cultural Youth Exchange

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Summary

Background

The 'Skills and Competences for a Global World' project began on the 1st August 2017 and ran until the 31st July 2019. Funded by Erasmus+ Key Action 2, the project was coordinated by the ICYE International Office and involved volunteers taking part in European Voluntary Service (EVS) and being placed in a range of host organisations around the world. A central part of the project was an impact study, which is the subject of this report. Placements for the ten participating volunteers were originally scheduled for the period from the 1st April to the 30th November 2018. However, in several instances the starting date was later due to delays with acquiring visas for the volunteering placements, with some placements running in to January 2019.

Aims and objectives

The impact assessment of the EVS has three specific aims:

1. To assess the impact of the EVS programme on the volunteers;
2. To assess the impact of the EVS programme on the host organisations;
3. To assess the strengths and weaknesses of ICYE / host coordinating organisations in terms of resources, systems in place, skills and competences for volunteer management, training and support.

Methodology

The impact study was undertaken by a taskforce consisting of members of staff from ICYE and an independent research consultant, Nick Ockenden. The following data collection approaches were employed:

- Baseline surveys sent to all ten volunteers shortly before the start of their volunteering.
- In-depth interviews towards the end of the volunteers' placements, with the ten volunteers, staff from host organisations (16), and staff from host-coordinating organisations (nine).

The volunteers

The characteristics of the volunteers

- Median age of 24, with an age range of 20 - 30 years.
- Nine female and one male volunteer.
- Originated from nine different countries, six within Europe, two in Asia, and two in South and Central America.
- Information from the questionnaire completed before their volunteering placement indicated that the volunteers tended to be open to new experiences and challenges, responded well to stress, were empathetic and open to listening, and wanted to learn a new language.
- Motivations for volunteering were commonly associated with learning new skills, meeting people and making friends, helping people, and being linked to their life philosophy. Volunteers also discussed wanting to challenge themselves and move outside of their comfort zone.

The volunteering activities

- Activities and roles undertaken during the placements tended to take place within either a school environment or organisations supporting children or adults with disabilities.
- Roles were frequently supportive in nature, assisting paid staff and other longer-term volunteers in tasks and activities, such as planning and running workshops, recreational activities or games, or assisting with meal preparation.
- Volunteers tended to spend 20 - 30 hours per week undertaking their volunteering.

The volunteering placement and the role of organisations

The key stakeholders in the volunteers' journeys were:

- Host organisations (HOs), where the volunteer conducts their volunteering placement.
- Host coordinating organisations (HCOs), which are organisations based in the placement country who provide much of the practical support to volunteers and host organisations, and who set up the systems and processes required.
- Sending organisations, who are the organisations within the volunteer's home country who coordinate the recruitment of the volunteers and link up with the HCOs.
- Erasmus+ National Agencies, who are responsible for volunteer training in European countries.

Impact on volunteers

Impact on volunteers is examined in relation to personal, social, and intercultural impact. While many notable benefits are identified, it should be noted that they are emergent in nature as their volunteering placements had not yet finished at the time of interview; it is possible that many longer-term impacts may be seen only long after their volunteering has come to an end.

Personal impact

- Language improvements were the most commonly discussed impact from the perspective of volunteers, matching their original desire to gain skills in this area.
- Development of softer skills were also seen to be important, and improvements in patience and communication skills were the most frequently discussed. While they often built on existing character traits displayed by the volunteers, the changes could frequently be significant and would be likely to be important in their future careers and lives in the longer-term.

Social impact

- Making new friends and forming relationships was the main impact discussed by volunteers in terms of interpersonal relationships. This included the volunteers making comparisons about the ease of making friends compared to their home country.
- Perhaps not surprisingly, the main topic of the volunteer's wellbeing was homesickness, which all volunteers felt to some degree. The severity of this could be impacted on by the extent to which they had made friends during their placement, and the degree to which they felt isolated.
- Physical illness was not commonly discussed as an aspect of wellbeing, but where it was more serious and sustained, it was seen to have had a more negative effect on the volunteer and the impact they could have in their placement.

- All volunteers discussed their personal enjoyment and satisfaction gained from their volunteering placements, whilst acknowledging the presence of stressful and challenging situations. For many, their volunteering appeared to be a life-changing experience that they would remember for their whole lives.

Intercultural learning

- Reflecting the importance of this to the volunteer programme, volunteers described important changes in their sense of identity and changes in their personality.
- Awareness of others and learning about new cultures were also important impacts for volunteers. This reflected the volunteers' willingness to learn from others and to experience new challenges and environments that was identified through the baseline questionnaire before they started their placements.

Impact on host organisations and beneficiaries

The impact of the volunteers' placements on the host organisations (HOs) and their beneficiaries is discussed in this section. The findings are predominantly drawn from the interviews with HOs, but also in some cases on the reflections of the volunteers themselves.

Impact on the host organisations

- The most frequently mentioned impact, discussed by both staff in the HOs and the volunteers, was an enhanced ability for the organisations to deliver more activities and services to their beneficiaries as a result of the involvement of volunteers. In many instances this included running activities that would likely not have been possible to deliver without the presence of the volunteers.
- Volunteers also frequently brought new skills, creativity, and energy to the host organisations, some of which resulted in new activities for their beneficiaries which were led by the volunteer.
- In some cases, it could be difficult for volunteers to articulate the impact they had on the organisation, as a result of working on multiple activities, sometimes working alone, and some cultural differences in the extent to which feedback is provided. In most cases, however, they felt that they were making a positive difference to the organisation.

Impact on staff

- While this connected closely to the impact on the host organisation, staff discussed personal impacts for them, including having been inspired by the courage of the volunteers to change their lives to do something new, and learning from their approach and skill sets.

Impact on beneficiaries

- Staff and volunteers commonly described how they felt beneficiaries – most commonly children and adults with disabilities – enjoyed their presence and appeared to be having a more enjoyable time, as well as forming good working relationships and, often, friendships.

Systems and process for volunteer management and support

The perspective of the host coordinating organisations (HCOs) for each of the countries which had hosted volunteers was explored. This was the ICYE office in each case, which had a coordinating role

between the volunteer, the sending organisation, and the host organisation. This focuses on what they perceived to be the strengths and weaknesses of their own volunteer management and support systems and processes, identifying areas on which to build and areas which could be further developed or improved; it does not, however, critically assess what is working and what is not.

Resources and capacity

- HCOs described how their limited resources could prevent them from providing a more comprehensive service to the host organisations and volunteers within their country.
- They also described how their physical location, which was often a long distance from the volunteers' placements, could prevent them from having a closer physical relationship with them and thereby practically limiting the support they could provide.

Systems in place for volunteer management

- The key strengths discussed focused on the comprehensive approaches to personal support, including induction, mentoring, and training, as well as mechanisms to support and help resolve conflicts and problems during the volunteer placement.
- Areas of weaknesses and those that could be improved included challenges associated with detecting problems with the volunteers' placements (partially related to their geographical location), but also the challenges of resolving some conflicts, the timing of the start of some placements which clashed with school holidays, and wishing to enhance their work on monitoring and evaluation of placements.

Conclusions and recommendations

- Volunteers experience important and significant personal benefits.
- Host organisations are able to deliver more services and have a bigger impact as a result of the volunteers.
- The cultural exchange element remains a strong and important element of the programme.
- Good volunteer management and support is vital to helping to achieve positive impact.

Recommendations for ICYE, host organisations and host coordinating organisations

1. Build in time for reflection on volunteer management processes.
2. Monitor and track past volunteers to better understand longer-term impact.
3. Seek feedback from volunteers more proactively throughout their placement to better identify emerging problems.
4. Give greater consideration to volunteer placement start times, where feasible.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The 'Skills and Competences for a Global World' project began on the 1st August 2017 and ran until the 31st July 2019. Funded by Erasmus+ Key Action 2, the project was coordinated by the ICYE International Office and involved volunteers taking part in European Voluntary Service (EVS) and being placed in a range of host organisations around the world.

The project had two broad objectives:

1. To empower ICYE members to reach their goals in fostering intercultural learning, solidarity and the values of human rights to the young volunteers they host and send;
2. To test the impacts of intercultural learning and supported reflection provided by project partners on its volunteers.

A central part of the project has been an impact study, which is the subject of this report.

Thirteen volunteer placements through the European Volunteer Service (EVS) were originally planned. However, as a result of two placements not being filled, and one volunteer returning before the end of their placement, ten volunteers – and their host organisations and host coordinating organisations – have been included in this impact study.

Placements were originally scheduled for the period from the 1st April to the 30th November 2018. However, in several instances the starting date was later due to delays with acquiring visas for the volunteering placements, with some placements running in to January 2019. All volunteers and their host organisations and host coordinating organisations were still included in this impact study, but in some cases the research with them was conducted a little later than originally planned.

1.2 Aims and objectives

The impact assessment of the EVS has three specific aims:

1. To assess the impact of the EVS programme on the volunteers;
2. To assess the impact of the EVS programme on the host organisations;
3. To assess the strengths and weaknesses of ICYE / host coordinating organisations in terms of resources, systems in place, skills and competences for volunteer management, training and support.

1.3 Methodology

The impact study was undertaken collaboratively between members of ICYE staff¹ (who led the fieldwork, completed and transcribed the interviews, and administered the surveys) and an independent research consultant, Nick Ockenden, who completed the analysis of the interviews and survey data and wrote the impact report. The following data collection approaches were employed:

1.3.1 Baseline surveys

Surveys were sent to all volunteers before they departed for their volunteering placements (April – May 2018). The survey was designed to understand more about their current position with regard to their skills and competences, before they started their volunteering. All ten volunteers completed the surveys. Given that a small number of volunteers were sent and completed the surveys, it is not the intention of this report to draw quantitative conclusions from this data; rather, the results will be used to give an impression of the opinions of those who volunteered in this study, and also to give an idea of their starting point with regard to skills and competences, which will be considered when exploring impacts in the in-depth interviews.

1.3.2 In-depth interviews

Interviews were conducted in each country at the end of the volunteer's placement (around November 2018) so as to maximise the opportunity to examine impact. Interviews were conducted by a member of the taskforce, with one member of staff (two in Europe) responsible for each region. In total, ten volunteers were interviewed, 16 staff from host organisations (across 11 different organisations), and nine staff from host coordinating organisations, broken down as follows:

Country of volunteering	Volunteer	Host organisation	Host coordinating organisation
Austria	1	1	1
Brazil	1	2 (same organisation)	1
Colombia	1	1	1
Finland	2	2 (different organisations)	1
Honduras	1	3 (same organisation)	1
India	1	3 (same organisation)	1
Kenya	1	1	1
Nigeria	1	1	1
Poland	1	2 (different organisations)	1
Total	10	16	9

¹ Cat Udal, Manager, ICYE United Kingdom; Kerubo Nyaribo, Director, ICYE Kenya; Rodolfo Bueso Clark, Incoming Coordinator, ICYE Honduras; Rubaica Jaliwala, Programme Officer, ICYE International Office; and Sara Paredes, General Director, Grenzenlos Interkultureller Austausch – ICYE Austria.

The majority of the interviews with host organisations and host coordinating organisations were conducted in English², but some were undertaken in the language of the host country; in such cases, an interpreter was present alongside the taskforce member who was leading the interview. In the case of Colombia and Honduras, interviews were conducted in Spanish and translated into English in the ICYE office where Spanish-English speaking staff were available.

All interviews were audio recorded with the permission of the interviewees. The taskforce member who conducted the interview transcribed verbatim the audio recordings once they were back in the office. In a limited number of instances, however, the quality of the audio recording was poor (particularly those undertaken in Kenya and Nigeria) which meant that portions of the interviews were unfortunately not clear and could not be included in the analysis.

1.3.3 Analysis

The full transcripts from the 35 interviews and the ten baseline surveys were analysed by Nick Ockenden, who also helped inform the development of the interview topic guides and the survey.

1.3.4 Maintaining anonymity

No individuals or organisations are named in this report and findings will be reported on anonymously. Quotes will, where necessary and to aid interpretation of the results, be attributed to either the volunteer, the host organisation, or the host coordinating organisation. Quotes have been edited to remove any gender identifiers (i.e. references to 'he' / 'she' replaced by 'they') but have otherwise not been amended from the recording. Furthermore, the country in which they were located will not be specified as it would frequently be possible to identify individuals in cases where there is only one volunteer in a particular country.

1.3.5 Structure of the report

This report begins with chapter two which provides context to the report by describing what we know about the volunteers, their motivations for involvement, and the activities they took part in. Chapter three then examines the impact of the EVS programme on the volunteers themselves, breaking this down in to personal impact, social impact, and intercultural impact. The impact of the EVS programme on host organisations will be explored in chapter four, alongside the impact on the communities. Chapter five will then discuss the findings in relation to the strengths and weaknesses of the host coordinating organisations, before chapter six concludes the study.

² Interviews were conducted in English in cases when the interviewee felt sufficiently comfortable expressing themselves in the language; if not, a translator was used. However, even in these cases, English was often not their native language and it is possible that some more subtle nuances may have been lost when describing their answers or interpreting questions. The interviewers were aware of this risk, and took time to fully explain the questions and clarify answers if necessary.

2. The volunteers and their placements

This section will give a brief feel for who the volunteers are, what they did, and what motivated them to take part. As has been stated, no identifying features will be included for any of the volunteers. Furthermore, given the small number of volunteers taking part, this section does not intend to provide a statistical overview and will not quote percentages as it is not able to speak on behalf of wider ICYE or EVS volunteers.

This section will also summarise the main elements and stages involved in the volunteer placement so as to provide a context for the following chapters, and also set out the key roles and functions provided by ICYE, the host coordinating organisation, and the host organisation.

2.1 The characteristics of the volunteers

Reflecting the age requirements to participate in EVS (where the maximum age is 30 years), the median age of the ten volunteers was 24, with an age range from 20 to 30 years. Volunteers were overwhelmingly female, with only one male taking part.

The ten volunteers came from nine different countries: six within Europe: two in Asia: and two in South and Central America. As such, the programme represents an example of an international volunteering programme with both North-South and South-North components.

The questionnaire completed by the ten volunteers before they began their placement also asked about how they felt about different situations and problems. The main objective here was to learn more about their starting point in terms of skills and competences, but they also give us some insight in to some of the behaviours and characteristics of the people volunteering.

For example, all ten volunteers agreed with the statement *'I try to understand other people's opinions even when they differ from mine'* while only three agreed with the statement *'I don't usually pay attention to what people think of me'*, suggesting a group of people who prioritise and value listening and empathy. Similarly, nine volunteers agreed with the statement *'when talking to people, I take notice of their body language'* and nine disagreed with *'I tend to say what I think without considering how others may perceive it / understand it / feel about it'*.

Value was also placed on team work and on working with people from different backgrounds, while the volunteers also appeared to be reflective in their approach to judgement and decision-making: eight agreed with the statement *'I carefully reflect on/think about an issue before I act or take decisions'* while seven agreed with *'before I take a decision, I evaluate the risks and think of different alternatives'*. No one said that they did not like to take decisions.

Likely reflecting some of their motivations for volunteering, nine volunteers agreed with the statement *'I like to be helpful'* and only one ticked *'I prefer not to involve myself in other people's issues'*.

In terms of approaches towards negotiation, volunteers favoured a consensus-building approach. Seven agreed with the statement *'I always try to compromise / seek consensus'* and seven also agreed with *'I take other people's opinion/positions in consideration'*. No volunteers ticked *'I always try to convince others of my opinions'*.

Again perhaps reflecting some of their reasons for volunteering in a new setting, eight volunteers ticked *'I like challenges / challenging situations because they offer an opportunity to learn'* while none ticked *'I don't react well to stress'*.

The volunteers also appeared to value organisational skills. Nine said *'I like to plan activities'* while eight agreed with *'I like to set goals and see them become a reality'* and eight also agreed with *'I like to take the initiative and develop my own ideas for activities'*. No one agreed with the statement that *'I am not much of a planner'*.

In terms of communication, the responses from volunteers indicate a more outgoing and possibly extroverted character. Ten volunteers agreed with the statement *'I openly communicate my feelings / I talk to others about my feelings'* and seven disagreed with the statement *'when I do not understand something, I tend to keep it to myself and try to figure it out later'*. Eight also disagreed with *'I have problems expressing myself'*.

2.2 The volunteering activities

The volunteering activities and roles undertaken during the placements tended to take place within either a school environment or organisations supporting children or adults with disabilities. In both cases, the roles were frequently supportive in nature, assisting paid staff and other longer-term volunteers in tasks and activities, such as planning and running workshops, recreational activities or games, or assisting with meal preparation. In some cases, volunteers had more direct responsibility, teaching children and accompanying them on social trips or visits to medical appointments. Other support functions could include IT work, general administrative, office-based tasks, or doing the laundry. In many cases, the volunteers were given the opportunity to develop and plan new activities, such as running dance classes for children.

While it varied between placement, volunteers tended to spend between 20 and 30 hours per week undertaking their core volunteering.

2.3 Motivations for volunteering

The ten volunteers' completed surveys give us a feel for why they decided to take part. They were presented with a list of 16 possible reasons and could identify as many or as few as they wished. Across all the volunteers, the most common answer was *'I think it will give me a chance to learn new skills'* (all ten volunteers ticked this), followed by *'I want to meet people / make friends'* (9), *'I want to help people'* (8), and *'it's part of my philosophy of life to help people'* (8). Despite the reported importance of acquiring and using skills, *'it will help me get on in my career'* was not so popular, with five volunteers agreeing with this.

The interviews with volunteers backed this up to some degree, but the most commonly mentioned motivation was a desire to live in a new country and experience a different culture:

'I was interested about going abroad doing, working voluntary with kids because I love kids. I wanted to try something totally new. Probably what I have never done. And also to see a different culture and get to really know it.'

'In [home continent] for me it is more or less the same but in another country, and to know how to live elsewhere, culture and everything.'

'I knew that I wanted to live in another country for some time for years and years and then I was during my education, I went to school to work with people with disabilities. That was the time I knew after this education I wanted to go to another country.'

Similarly, there was a strong wish to challenge themselves in new circumstances and learn from that experience:

'If you push yourself to go somewhere else, you know like, face fears and like put yourself in new positions and face new things, it changes you completely, I mean it helps you to grow up even faster.'

'It was more to live somewhere new in another country and to get out of my comfort zone.'

People also discussed reasons related to their career or their future path around work and study, helping them to gain new experiences or simply work out what they wanted to do with their lives:

'To try to figure out what to do with my life afterwards, because I was kind of confused.'

'I have a five-year experience but I need to gain new experience with new country and I need to share this experience after that with my country.'

'I wanted to learn more about working in an NGO, more about development work, expose myself to completely different culture, to new things.'

2.4 The volunteering placement and the role of organisations

This report does not seek to describe the support that volunteers received in detail, but this section outlines at a high level the key stages in the volunteers' journey and some of the main responsibilities of the different stakeholder groups involved. The key partners involved are:

- Host organisations (HOs), where the volunteer conducts their volunteering placement (this can also be referred to as 'the project' by the volunteers in some cases). Annex A provides an anonymised description of all ten HOs involved in the project and the impact assessment;

- Host coordinating organisations (HCOs), which are organisations based in the placement country who will provide much of the practical support to volunteers and host organisations, and who set up the systems and processes required;
- Sending organisations, who are the organisations within the volunteer’s home country who coordinate the recruitment of the volunteers and link up with the HCOs;
- National Agencies, who take on some of the roles of the HCOs, especially for placements within EU countries.

The table below sets out the responsibilities of these partners during the volunteers’ journey:

Stage in the volunteer’s journey	Role of the sending organisation	Role of the host coordinating organisation	Role of the National Agency	Role of the host organisation
Completion of recruitment.	Pre-departure / preparation meetings.			
Arrival in the host country.	Stay in touch to monitor progress.	On-arrival training (placements in non-EU countries). Two-day intercultural training in non-EU countries (part of on-arrival training). One-day intercultural training in EU countries (arrival training completed by National Agencies).	On-arrival training (placements in EU countries).	On-the-job practical training.
Volunteering placement.	Stay in touch to monitor progress.	Mid-term training (placements in non-EU countries). Monthly contact with the volunteer (remote).	Mid-term training (placements in EU countries).	On-the-job practical training. On-going support and supervision.
Completion of volunteering placement.	Stay in touch to monitor progress.	Half-day / one-day final evaluation meeting.		
Return to home country.	Stay in touch to monitor progress.		Half-day / one-day final evaluation meeting (volunteers from EU countries).	

The exact nature of the support provided by HOs and HCOs can vary between countries, and tasks will frequently be divided locally between the two organisations. There is, therefore, a degree of flexibility in how arrangements work, which was reflected in the interviews with HCOs and HOs, who described variations in the type and comprehensiveness of support provided to volunteers. The HCO is, however, responsible for the majority of the practical support to the volunteer, including that food, accommodation, local transport and expenses are provided. However, the HCOs will frequently have agreements with the HOs, and in some cases, the practicalities are provided by the HOs directly. The volunteer can also stay with host families who will provide food and accommodation and be reimbursed for their expenses.

Volunteers receive on-going support during their placement, primarily from the HO but also, to a lesser degree, from the HCO. Volunteers each have a mentor from the HO for the duration of their placement to support them with matters of wellbeing and integration in the community. In addition, volunteers will have a supervisor at the HO who is responsible for their line management. The mentor will maintain contact with the supervisor to help resolve conflicts if they emerge and to seek to maximise learning outcomes, providing on-going opportunities for reflection on their learning.

3. The impact on the volunteers

This chapter will examine the impact of the volunteering programme on the volunteers themselves, drawing data from the questionnaires they completed, the interviews held with them towards the end of their placements, and data from the host organisation and host coordinating organisation interviews, who were also asked to reflect on the impact on the volunteers. It will discuss impact in three areas: personal impact (e.g. skills, competences and knowledge, and effect on their career plans); social impact (e.g. interpersonal relationships and wellbeing); and intercultural impact (e.g. sense of identity and awareness of other cultures).

It should be noted that many of the impacts discussed are emergent in nature as their volunteering placements had not yet finished at the time of interview; it is possible that many longer-term impacts may not be seen until long after their volunteering has come to an end.

3.1 Personal impact

3.1.1 Skills, competences and knowledge

Volunteers and the staff who worked alongside them described a range of different improvements and changes to their skills, competences and knowledge as a result of their volunteering, which included:

(a) Language

One of the most frequently cited skills that volunteers said they gained were improvements in the language of the country in which they were volunteering. This tended to be seen as a personal gain predominantly but was also perceived as allowing them to form better relationships with their colleagues and other people and to be more effective in their role.

Such language improvements also perhaps reflect that this was often important to the volunteers before they started their placement, with six of the ten volunteers agreeing with the statement *'I want to be able to understand and communicate with people in my host country'* and only one agreeing with *'basic understanding of the language is enough for me'*. Comments included:

'They [the children] really appreciate this, that you are trying to adapt to their culture. Not only just, okay, this is me and I don't have to change, but to make sure that you also like, want to like, be with them.'

'I am able to understand almost everything that someone says to me.'

'I would say I'm like I basic level, but I consider that a huge improvement because it's a really hard language.'

This was also corroborated by the staff supporting the volunteers in some cases:

'Comprehension is definitely good. Spoken is considering it's nine months, it's very good. I've known people living here for ten years and they still don't know.'

'I think they arrived at a certain level about with the [country] language so that they can communicate really with people.'

While they were often pleased with their newly acquired language skills, volunteers could also feel that there was room for improvement and there had been challenges to finding the time and space to learn:

'I definitely wish I could have learned more, but what I have experienced is also sometimes I also feel I really like by myself. Why don't you practice more? But sometimes if the energy is not there.'

(b) Patience

Volunteers frequently remarked on how they had seen improvements in their patience, something that was often a necessity within their placements. In some cases, this could be a more dramatic shift in personality, with longer-term potential, but in others it appeared to enhance existing attributes:

'I think I have more patience. Sometimes I do not understand how much patience I have, but this, they taught me.'

'I think I learned a little about being patient. Because I had this different idea about time. And I have to convince myself that if I'm waiting for something for two hours it's not because someone doesn't respect my time or something like that. It's just different culture, and I need to accept it.'

'I have been so impatient my whole life. But here, like, I don't even know where how it came. Like little by little of course, but that is what I have noticed. It's the biggest thing. My biggest gain.'

(c) Communication

Gains and improvements in different forms of communication skills were discussed by many of the volunteers. In some cases, this appeared to be about recognising the value of different viewpoints and listening more:

'Don't take things personally and try to talk about things without trying to change their opinion because everyone has to accept that everyone has their own opinion and you can talk about things and that doesn't mean that someone will change their opinion.'

'I had to learn to communicate differently myself. To be a lot more empathic and listen to more to the body language than to the spoken language.'

This could also be recognised by the staff, who spoke of improvements and changes in behaviour:

'We had so diverse characters and personalities that...they had to start accepting that, that everyone works in a different way, has different working styles, different ideas and so on.'

Such changes often appeared to be directly related to the type of volunteering that was being undertaken, with some volunteers describing how working with people from a background that they were not used to, including people with disabilities, had forced them to change their communication style and learn about how to engage with people with different needs:

'In my daily work with disabled peoples, I learnt about how to connect with them and assist them, and I learnt that my emotional as well as physical support can be an invaluable source of strength of them.'

'I learned that a lot that sometimes how to deal with aggressiveness is to let them express the feeling first and we give them the full attention how they express that aggressiveness and then if they are calm, we tell them, that what you did is not correct.'

(d) Managing conflict

Volunteers often discussed being out of their comfort zone and having to deal with challenging situations, whether it was a direct part of their volunteering role or connected with their wider life living in a different culture. This could teach them about how to manage confrontation and become more comfortable with it:

[Referring to a conflict within their shared accommodation]: *'I was the one trying to get all the parties together, try to solve, try to calm down and like find a middle ground how to move forward because, I mean, we are still living together so we just need to see each other, so it was kind of like trying to deal with different people that is coming from different cultures or that have different ages.'*

'I still don't really like confrontation. And that's a thing I really struggle with but during my stay here I have realised that sometimes you have to go through this confrontation to change something.'

(e) Managing stress

Reflecting the fact that volunteers often described multiple and complex challenges to their placements, it is perhaps not surprising that they also spoke about how their ability to manage and cope with stress and personal problems had changed positively:

'I got a lot of courage to speak more about what I'm feeling because, yeah, if I just keep it inside with myself I will not solve the problem that I feel with myself, so, I, I talk to people, I get more self-convinced.'

'I learned to let things go and don't make...I let things go...They're things that are independent of me, that is, there are things that do not depend from me.'

'Handling stress, I think. Because it is just a very, very big stress factor to live abroad. To live in a total other culture with other values with other ways people are viewing you. You're abroad.'

You have money. You're a woman. You're a young woman. That means "blah blah". All these kinds of things. Like that can be, that is actually so, so stressful. So, like, overcoming that.'

Such gains can also be understood in the context of the findings from the questionnaire before the volunteers started their placement (see section 2.1). Most volunteers agreed with the statement that they like challenging situations as it gave them an opportunity to learn, and only one of the ten agreed with the statement '*I don't react well to stress*'.

(f) Self-confidence

Volunteers also spoke about how they had seen their self-confidence increase during their time volunteering, again being closely related to coping with – and in many cases thriving on – challenging situations. This could be a more general personal development, or could sometimes relate to their ability to fulfil specific tasks:

'[The volunteering] increased my self-confidence in a different, different country and alone from my family, environment, because I am here, alone and it's a, it's my first time in different country, it's, I've never been to any other country before.'

'Help me overcome inhibitions and improve my self-confidence, and it was a huge challenge for, to work with the 12 intellectually disabled persons.'

'Speaking in public, I always had a problem with that. Here, sometimes I had to do that, so I learned more about that. I feel more comfortable with that.'

3.1.2 Career plans and aspirations

While the pre-volunteering questionnaire did not identify career-related factors as one of the top motivators for volunteering, in many cases the experience of the volunteers appears to have had a notable effect on their plans for their future career path, whether that was study, employment, or further volunteering. In some cases, this has re-affirmed what they already knew; that they were working in a field that interested them and they felt was valuable, and they wanted to continue to do this afterwards, building on the experience and interests they had before they started their volunteering:

'It's also like even more convinced me that I love the area I'm working with. So all artistic jobs like arts and craft, jewellery, dancing, this is something I love to do. So I also want to continue this when I go back to [home country].'

In other cases, it had actively changed the views of the volunteer and pushed them towards a new career in the future that was directly connected to what they had been doing in their volunteering.

'I realised I have the patience to educate people specially with disabilities...I want to continue to study about education but it will be more specific I want to learn about education for disabled people.'

'I'm more open to the idea of working internationally and working in maybe in an NGO, with social works and stuff like that. And like now that is what I want to join university next year. That is, like, I think being here is like made me more confident that you can take on such a job.'

This could also affect volunteers' views about more general plans for their lives, including volunteering:

'Volunteering changed everything and now I really want to travel more and know more countries, more people, more organisations, and also go more times, not only travel as staff, but also meet other organisations and be there giving time as a volunteer.'

3.2 Social impact

3.2.1 Interpersonal relationships

As has been seen in section 2.1, wanting to meet people and make friends was a common motivator for the volunteers to take part in the programme. Unsurprisingly, therefore, they often commented on the ease or the difficulty of making friends during their volunteering placement, and how this compared to their experience in their home country. For many, it was seen to be easier than the country they had come from, especially for volunteers coming from Europe, something that often exceeded their expectations:

'It didn't take a lot of time for me to, to be involved in the community, because they are really welcoming people.'

'Everybody is friends with everyone. It's amazing here...It doesn't matter who you are or what age you are or anything, like, everyone are friends together.'

'When I had time to travel, I must say it was way easier to have, like, [host country nationality] friends than from other countries because, like, other people, like, especially Europeans are, like, really closed people.'

However, some volunteers also found it harder to make friends due to differences in people's behaviour and culture that they were not used to:

'It was not easy at all because I found that the people here, they tend to be more, I don't know what to say, individualistic.'

Some volunteers also remarked that the ease of making friends in their host country was not necessarily matched by a longevity of friendship, unlike their experience in their home country:

'There [in Europe] it is difficult to have a friend, but they are friends for life. Here it seems to me that it is very easy to have friends, but they are not all for life. It's like one day you can talk to me and another day you forget me.'

'I think it's more culture and I just didn't get used to. So I was so angry that every time when I was thinking that I have a friend something had to happen.'

In some cases, they could also be somewhat suspicious of people's motivations for friendships, especially people they had met randomly on public transport or in towns:

'It was easy to make friends and meet new people. Somehow a bit too easy maybe. Sometimes, sometimes they were after, I don't know, maybe wrong intentions.'

Friends were also made directly as a result of the placement, with volunteers developing close relationships with both colleagues and their host families:

'The mamas are so sweet to me, they are like taking me in like I was a lost daughter to them, they are really showing me so much love. Every morning I'm coming I'm in such...I feel like so loved.'

'I learnt so many things from my host mother also. She teach me like my mother. Yeah, we have a bonding, like mother and daughter now.'

'It's like, I feel like my family. I feel like always my family. Like today I was, it's my last day, I was, so feel bad, maybe I was crying. In morning time, I was already crying but maybe last time I'm crying because it's a strong bonding with my patients, my mentors, it's like family.'

In some instances, the experience of volunteering, being in a different culture, and overcoming challenges, had changed the way they approached other inter-personal relationships, having become more mature:

'I was kinda of introverted person and now it's not so...I can be more open to people...When I have arguments with my brother, it's like we against each other like, we not listen to each other but now its like, so, I give you the chance and then you have to give me the chance because I already gave you the chance.'

3.2.2 Wellbeing

(a) Homesickness

Perhaps the most common and most pronounced wellbeing issue discussed by volunteers was feelings of being homesick, affecting different individuals to a greater or lesser extent. In some cases this could be exacerbated by feelings of isolation and not having made friends or closer relationships during their placement, but the majority of interviews with host coordinating organisations and host organisations testified to the common nature of this problem for volunteers. Comments included:

'I've been independent for a couple of years now but still like during birthdays, mother's day, father's day, these kind of dates you just wish to be there...I mean I was missing the food, the people, the music, everything so that, like, at the beginning I was, like...I guess it was just because of the beginning.'

Some volunteers recognised the complexity of this, feeling both that they were very homesick and wanted to return, but at the same time were very keen to stay longer in their placements:

'The main homesickness what came like after four months and it was, like, it was terrible because I knew I don't really want to go there I really want to stay here. But still I had like the missing feeling was so big. It was so hard to deal with that because you just, you can't, you just have to pass those feelings and there is nothing of what you can do about it.'

'Of course, missing the home and I thought actually it doesn't happen. Because I have been travelling a lot, but it was totally different when I came here. I am so far. I have no possibilities to go back to home any time.'

Such feelings could be exacerbated by the situation the volunteer was in. One volunteer, for example, discussed problems including not feeling guided by their host organisation, experiencing problems with the language, and being over-protected by their host family:

'I think that has a lot to do with my own personality that I'm not I don't find it really easy to approach new people but it also has to do a little bit with my living situation because I enjoy living with my host mother a lot but she's always worried and he doesn't like when I leave the house later.'

(b) Stress

Despite the fact that volunteers often described their improved ability to manage stressful situations, they also frequently spoke about the challenges they could experience as part of their volunteering and as a result of living in a different culture, which could sometimes have a negative impact on their mental wellbeing:

'I think the worst experience is like I'm just so tired of being called white and being called different. I'm just like, can I please just be here don't scream at me, don't do anything. Just let me be like a normal other [host country nationality] girl. That is the worst thing.'

'So that makes me feel sometimes lonely or not understood or the timings. I just felt sometimes the people don't respect me. Because they're coming late.'

[Referring to a conflict within their accommodation]: *'There was no communication it was really awkward because usually like when you want to go to your place just to relax, to lay in bed or just to take a coffee or something.'*

(c) Physical health

While volunteers could often be unwell during their placement, this was not generally seen to be sufficiently serious to detract notably from their experience. In two cases, more significant periods of ill health were discussed and for one volunteer the length and intensity of the illness had a more negative effect on their volunteering activities as well as their own wellbeing:

'They were many times sick and they had to go the hospital so we had to do, we had to follow up on their health and how they were feeling. At some point we thought it could be a better idea to bring them back to [the capital city].' (HCO staff member)

(d) Enjoyment and satisfaction

Volunteers also commonly discussed the positive side of wellbeing as a result of their volunteering, in that they had gained a great deal of satisfaction from volunteering and had enjoyed their experience, something that had created a lasting positive impact on them:

'I am so happy about it. I felt so welcome, and it is just like, it has been the greatest experience of my life.'

'It's something like [host country and town] sure has some as a part in my heart, great, and that's why I'm going to be very sad when I leave here, but in my mind I'm sure I want someday return to visit them, sure I cannot say no, I think I'm going back.'

'Just having that feeling that when you wake up in the morning and it is not a trouble for you to go to work.'

3.3 Intercultural impact

3.3.1 Sense of personal identity

Volunteers described changes to how they viewed or understood themselves as a result of their placements. Such changes were often associated with an increasing sense of personal power, strength, and resilience, recognising that they could effectively cope with challenges more than they had previously thought. It could also involve learning about their own weaknesses and how these could be accepted, managed and potentially overcome:

'This has been the biggest and like so different to what I have done, so I'm not kind of afraid of any new things after this.'

'That's what just gave me like a bullet proof, whatever. That that feeling of, wow, imagine I lived here for eight months and I managed to do like, I know how to find my way around the town.'

'I'm really fragile and I'm really vulnerable...And coming up from that, coming from acknowledging that has somehow made me stronger.'

In some instances, this involved changes to personality, which could enhance existing character traits that they were aware of before their volunteering:

'Even though I have always been an open-minded but it is even bigger right now. It's even like I have no, how do you say it, I don't expect anything about anyone. I'm just like being so open-minded but now especially after this trip.'

'All my life I have been positive and optimistic but still it is even more. Like if I can say I have gained even more to be positive and optimistic with everything. Just like how kind you have to be. How kind you are to the people how that effects to everyone and how they treat you.'

In other cases, volunteers described how they had become more at ease with themselves and happier as a result. One volunteer, for example, noted how this had come about as a result of living in a quieter area:

'I can get use to myself to be alone but, but not lonely because I have lot of time for, to, to speak with myself, to think more deep about how the life is going.'

Self-awareness also appeared to develop amongst some of the volunteers. This could be associated with increased empathy and understanding of others:

'I mean, like yeah, I have a title but that doesn't give me any leverage or make me any better than someone who is putting his heart out every day.'

'I've learnt how you can live with a little less with everything like. And also, like how you can be happy even though you don't have. You don't have a lot in your life and everybody is always welcome to everywhere.'

3.3.2 Awareness of others

As has been seen, findings from the questionnaire volunteers completed before their placement (see section 2.1) indicate that the volunteers could place value on empathy, listening, and understanding the views of others. It is in this context, therefore, that the volunteers often described how their perception of others had changed as a result of their volunteering, having developed a deeper, more nuanced understanding of people's lives and challenges, and the issues they faced. This could, for example, be focused on levels of poverty and people's living conditions, which volunteers often said they would have thought of more stereotypically prior to their volunteering:

'Here it is problems with politics, with corruption, that is in Europe also not as much as here. But I cannot say that they are bad people here, it is because of the situation that is here, it is not like someone was born bad, it is because he has no other option to do.'

'When I think about slums, I don't think about poor people who don't know anything. I know people who are living in slums...the issues get faces.'

There were also examples of changed perceptions of people, and some volunteers noted how their views of disability had changed as a result of having spent a great deal of time with people with different levels of disability in their placements:

'Many people are afraid of people who have disabilities, here is also the same, in all parts of the world, but for example when I go out with them to the street now, people see how this is weird, for me it is like it is same, as everyone, and I do not see disability of them now.'

'I feel it has opened my eyes for such a new group, like, just working with disability, disabled children. Disabled people. Because I think before, I would never have thought about it.'

'I was, like, so shocked of the place, because I have never been around disabled people like that, but then I was also very shocked of my own reaction. I was like how can you react like this?'

Some of these changes were also connected with improved empathy as well as greater respect for others and a recognition that matters were not as simple as they had perhaps thought in the past:

'I guess like what it helped me to realise is like all the ideas is that you're entitled of course to your opinion but you have to at least both sides of the story, you cannot just pretend that you have the truth because that you read it in a book or you hear it in the news or Google it.'

'So not to judge someone if they communicate differently than me.'

3.3.3 Understanding of host country culture and society

Closely connected to their increased understanding of other individuals, many volunteers spoke about how their experience, particularly living with a host family, had increased their knowledge and understanding of the culture and society in which they were living, especially of the country's foods, but also of cultural attitudes towards people living together:

'Now I like every kinds of salads and every kind of vegetarian [host country] food. But still I don't like [host country] soups. I always try to eat but still I don't like any soup.'

'It's the good chance for me to create the new food for them if they don't have tried this for me. My chance to introduce them this food, it's good and stuff and we don't have to eat pork all the time.'

'It was shocking for me because I heard here my two or three mentors, they all are not married but they have children.'

This could also concern increased recognition of the rules – both legal and cultural – that governed the societies that they were living in, including recognising their host country's strict adherence to crossing roads only when green to eating with their left hand and dressing appropriately. It could also, however, involve learning about elements of a culture that were not so positive:

'It just like surprises me every day how the situation can be like that and how women and gay men and black men are disrespected. And like how unequal it is.'

3.3.4 Reflecting on their own culture

Some volunteers recognised that their own cultural background had an important role to play and had affected how people interacted with them and in turn how they need to interact with others. Volunteers could, for example, describe enhanced awareness of the necessity of altering their own

behaviour and what they would say in certain situations, recognising that their background from a more economically wealthy country brought with it a degree of privilege:

'Sometimes just because I'm white, it also caused, I would say, at some point, you are treated like a queen because you're white, but in the same time, they just like want to scam you because you're white.'

'Now that I've lived here, I have realised that my own culture really has impacted the way that I do things more than I thought.'

An important element of reflecting on their own culture was a desire to take learning and insight back to their own country. Volunteers frequently discussed ways of doing things differently in their home country, which could be both positive reflections but also have elements they would miss from their time volunteering:

'I think it's going to be a bit different when I head back to [home country] when it comes to helping others. We need more organisation, work on punctuality and for people to take more responsibility, and I will make sure to remind everyone that we are all equal.'

'People are paying tax but government gave so many good opportunities like free hospital, free study. I also heard about study, it's the best study here and this is so many, I need to change so many things in my country.'

'Now that I return I will be angry because they will all walk sad, bored in the street and if I go to a store nobody says "Good morning, how are you?", but all "What do you want?" with one face. That's for sure when I come back it's going to bother me a lot.'

4. The impact of the EVS programme on the host organisations and beneficiaries

This chapter examines the impact of the volunteers' placements on the host organisations (HOs) and their beneficiaries. The findings are predominantly drawn from the interviews with HOs, but also in some cases on the reflections of the volunteers themselves.

4.1 Impact on the host organisations

The most common type of impact of the volunteers on the organisations they were giving their time to was an improved capacity to deliver their work. This was frequently about simply having more people to physically undertake the work, and allowing the organisation to deliver more activities, reflecting the fact that organisations often seemed to have limited capacity and resources:

'As many other volunteers as well, they help in many, many things in the practical life. It is always two hands more to make something, as there are many things to do in the house, laundry, cleaning.'

'To help one of our ladies to shower, to have a shower, is something that maybe in the beginning they were not willing or didn't want to do it but very soon they could do that and they understood that there is also a need that we, physically we take care of the people.'

'I think it's just an additional hand. Definitely because, you know, no matter we have 12 staff members and only 60 children, which is a fairly good adult - student ratio, but just having an additional hand has helped and they have been very good at also individually recognizing the kids' needs and handling that. So I think that has been a big, big support to the kids.'

Volunteers also spoke about how their presence could allow the HO to do more:

'You're coming and making their work easy.'

'They say it is very helpful, I share my own country art and craft works and things, experience and also in cooking and also as a nurse, patient care, and also this kind of helps.'

Volunteers could, however, sometimes find it difficult to confidently describe the scale of impact they were having on the HO. In some cases they attributed this to working on multiple projects and it being challenging to isolate impact, working on activities that could be performed alone and therefore disconnected from staff (e.g. graphic design), or differences in cultural communication and individual personalities not being inclined to feed back regularly on performance:

'I mean with the kids it's hard to tell because sometimes they are like super, er, they want to spend the whole day with you and other days they just ignore you. You just don't exist for them. It's hard to tell.'

In other cases, this appeared to indicate a combination of realism and modesty about the part they played within the bigger picture, noting that they had made a difference but that it was only one part of the wider work of the HO and what they were achieving as an organisation:

'It's not like they cannot live without me but I'm being helpful. Many times the teachers have to do something there is another supervisor to watch the kids. And also with kids they are very interested about my living in [host country] and they are like very happy about my presence.'

'I cannot say one hundred per cent for sure that they are, er, super happy with me but I feel satisfied and I think that that's a good indicator.'

As well as expanding current work, the presence of the volunteers often allowed the organisation to deliver new activities – sometimes ones they had wanted to but had not had the capacity to deliver, and in other cases, new activities that they had not thought about. This reflects the fact that volunteers could bring in new and diverse skill sets and interests that the organisation did not have access to otherwise:

'They are the only one who's come and does amazing dance classes with the kids and [the children] learnt [home country] dance.'

'[The volunteer's talent for painting] has been very significant for us, and we discovered over time that painting is the gift that they can offer us or that they could offer us during this time that they were here with us.'

'They've been making it possible that we been able to go outside and do things more with quite many work-shoppers because they've been helping one person who cannot go outside, without, if there's nobody helping her, being next to her or him, so it is very important.'

In other cases, staff could describe how the support of the volunteer had helped establish and build new partnerships:

'They developed...quite a lot cooperation with the primary schools because this is something which we, which we actually started...not so long ago, so they, so they are our link with one primary school and actually a bit based on that we developed an ICYE project in another primary school.'

A potentially softer impact is how an effective volunteer could create a reassuring presence within the organisation and a confidence that they could rely on the volunteer and what they were doing. This relates partially to the increased capacity that the volunteer could provide, but was also connected to their confidence and ability:

'I think they stepped up. I know they've also stepped into the kitchen when we've had a huge issue and the cook was off and you know, they've just stepped in and it's. They've just been a part of the whole thing.'

'I feel very confident of the way they teach, what they teach, how they teach and their interaction with the children I think has been amazing.'

'It's their readiness to take on any task and openness to take on a task and be part of the team.'

Impacts on the organisation were not, however, guaranteed. In one case, where the volunteer placement had not worked out as planned, staff reflected that the impact on the organisation had been limited, partly due to the volunteer task being changed but also because the volunteer's skillset was not a close match for what the organisation required. Other organisations felt that while their experiences had been positive, they would have benefitted further if the placements had been for a longer period of time:

'I believe we would need more time to coexist, so we could think and plan some actions like this with [volunteer]. Because even the planning time of our educators is limited, so it would need a longer time.'

'Half a year is a very short time. I would wish that she could have stayed the whole year at least. Six months is very short but still, I don't know why it was only six months but maybe it was because of the economical, because of the money, but six months is very short. We just feel that it would have been very good to continue until summer with her.'

4.2 Impact on staff

The most frequently discussed impact on staff who worked alongside the volunteers was that they had been inspired by their energy, commitment, and creativity of the volunteers, something staff members were often trying to take in to their wider work. This included acknowledging the bravery of volunteers who they felt were doing something very different in a culture that was new to them:

'The idea that you can dream and you can work hard towards your dream and try to organise your life and your activities around it, so that you're motivated in all of these, is a very big thing that I felt that [the volunteer] has been able to bring here.'

'It has generated new ideas, has also generated new approaches in [the host organisation] that we have a broader mission than what we already had in [the host organisation], it has given us many ideas, it has awakened the creativity also, both in the assistants and the people with disabilities that we serve, that is what has been most important for use of [the volunteer].'

In other cases, staff spoke about how they had reflected personally as a result of the work and approach of the volunteer:

'I learned first of all to have courage. I think it is a very courageous act to leave their structure and come to a different space. It is something very motivating, to be available, to be in a distant place, in other words, not knowing who will receive you.'

'Humility, their humility, approaching the people, no choosing.'

This could include recognising that a volunteer was coming from a different culture and that they therefore had different ways of interpreting and responding to challenges, which could create learning for staff:

'Bringing these things from different cultures and different people from different backgrounds, and always you have to think like why is he or she doing things like this, and why do we do like this and...you kind of learn to think different way.'

'[The volunteer] has been bringing some colour to our community with their culture, with their way, their open mind and they've been really arriving, arrived here and being here now.'

Staff also reported more directly learning about the volunteer's culture, especially food:

'They've been teaching some [country] dance here and [country] cooking. We have been getting to know, [country] food because we are also here cooking sometimes by ourselves together with the work-shoppers so they've brought some ideas for that and also these [country] craft works and colours.'

A further area of learning for staff was around volunteer management. Several organisations reflected that they had gained knowledge about how to make improvements to how their organisation involved and supported volunteers, based on their experiences of what worked and what did not with the volunteers. This most commonly included becoming more organised with regard to involving volunteers:

'I think that we re-confirmed that it's good to have just a framework for the project and then depending on what kind of volunteers come then...within this framework.'

'We must have a plan established every time a volunteer comes. We must know what it is that the volunteer achieves in the time that we have that opportunity to have the volunteer with us.'

4.3. Impact on beneficiaries and local communities

The main benefits discussed by the staff focused on the direct beneficiaries that the volunteers spent time with, rather than members of the wider community. This commonly included describing the positive relationships that the volunteers could build with the two main beneficiary groups of the host organisations, children and people with disabilities:

'I think [the volunteer] has very good connections to our people. The people also, one good sign always is that our people, we call them villagers, they come to [the volunteer] and they want to talk to them and they want to know how they're doing.'

'Yeah like kind of motivational and in the morning you can see, you can see already because [the volunteer] has been here over half year so they are kind of important in the morning and people want to come to them and say hi.'

'We value this very much that the children arrive and are greeted at the front gate and they were always there.'

This in turn was discussed in terms of an improved environment for the beneficiaries who, for example, *'got a really relaxed atmosphere'* as a result of the work of one volunteer. In another case, staff spoke about how the volunteer had increased the participation of some beneficiaries who may have been less involved before:

'Some of the kids, who have otherwise been disinterested, are starting to show more interest now. So that is an amazing thing.'

This could also include children gaining new knowledge about the volunteer's home country, something they would not have had access to previously:

'So, knowledge which the children usually don't get at school about [volunteer's home country], also it's not academic knowledge but knowledge about real life.'

Volunteers also often described how they had seen enjoyment and engagement from the people they were supporting, something that in turn had had a positive impact on themselves:

'...also like noticing how important I am to the kids. And how happy they are to see me. Those are always like every day when I come here those are the best feeling that I can have. They're just like "hey, teacher I missed you". And those are the feelings to like what makes my project even better.'

5. Volunteer management and support within host coordinating organisations

This chapter examines the perspective of the host coordinating organisations (HCOs) for each of the countries which had hosted volunteers. This was the ICYE office in each case, which had a coordinating role between the volunteer, the sending organisation, and the host organisation.

This section will focus on what they perceived to be the strengths and weaknesses of their volunteer management and support systems and processes, identifying areas on which to build and areas which could be further developed or improved; it is not, however, its intention to provide a detailed description of the processes which the HCO goes through in the process of placing and supporting a volunteer (see section 2.4), nor to critically evaluate what is working and what is not.

5.1 Resources and capacity

Organisations tended to focus on the challenges they experienced when supporting host organisations and the volunteers. The first main challenge was one of location, with HCOs describing how not being close to where the volunteers were based could make it challenging to visit them and support them directly:

'Since we are not in [capital city] it is difficult to visit them, so then in this case like what is happening with [the volunteer], where they had problems, to talk about specifically what happened with them.'

'The challenge is that our office and most of our happenings are situated in [capital city] and then the volunteers who are located in different parts of [the country], it's quite challenging for them to participate and that's like a constant challenge, on how to make equal participation possible.'

'It would be so nice to have more time to visit the projects but if you have like 35 volunteers around [the country], it's not that easy to go and visit and see how the cooperation is going but I think it's important also to visit the projects every now and then to have some kind of ideas of the everyday life of the volunteers are having.'

A second main challenge discussed was around limited resources which could prevent them from delivering more:

'Time resources. Size of the organization. We are a very small organization. We do not have capacity to much more than we do.'

'It will be too expensive for us to start saying we want to organise, probably a workshop or something for just more volunteers and we wouldn't really get what we need out of it.'

In other cases, the inability to do more could also be a reflection of the fact that they had an approach which provided a comprehensive model of support to the volunteers, which they did not want to

weaken. One organisation, for example, prided themselves on offering a lot of support to their volunteers and felt that the only possible way to increase the number of volunteers would be to decrease the quality of the support provided to them:

'[We have] lots of individual contact with the volunteers. I think if we have more volunteers this wouldn't be really possible. We would have to work in a different way.'

5.2 Strengths of volunteer management and support systems

Staff described a number of different systems and approaches for volunteer management and support that they appeared confident about and felt represented good practice within their organisations.

(a) Mentors and personal support

This included the emphasis placed on volunteers having mentors and a named, personal contact who they could approach for information or in times of difficulty:

'So we do have this like...specially for long-term volunteers we have, we call it '[Country] Friend'. It's like a local mentor person, a local person that speaks English and voluntarily helps out and offers their time, changes numbers, WhatsApp.'

'I think that regarding the support, I think the most important is the network like me and the mentors at work and the host family and I'm in touch with them also, checking how things are going and they let me know if there is something they are worried about.'

'I always tell them you can call me whatever time, whatever time you want, sometimes they ask random stuff like 'Do you know how I get to [town] the best?', but sometimes it's really urgent, like sometimes its ok, 'Which doctor do I best go to?', so they will always ask me or [staff member], or one of the local volunteers that they have the contact number.'

This could include more informal, ongoing support around pastoral matters such as being homesick, in which a HCO could provide information on the likelihood of this happening and how to address it, such as linking up with other NGOs or volunteers who are going through the same thing. In other cases, this could be simply having on-going, informal contact, often social, which could provide opportunities to raise issues and concerns:

'So any time when we meet to play the board games or anything like that, we try also to ask them how they are, if they had any problems and so on and it results in that that they feel comfortable with writing with problems as well any time they have something.'

'I build up this relationship, this confidence relationship with them, in which they can approach me and ask me any of these particular questions.'

(b) Resolving conflict

Where problems were of a more serious nature, HCOs frequently spoke of comprehensive systems in place which were designed to resolve conflict and support resolution:

'First listen, and two analyse and then...how do call it when you weigh the both sides, you know listen to both sides and see if somewhere in the middle is the true you know cause this is also, not the truth but different perceptions also sometimes lead to problems.'

'What we do is start before problems escalate we try to talk directly to the volunteer or the persons involved in the problem and to talk directly to them and to see how we can solve it. If we realise that the problems cannot be solved. Then we decide to change.'

'I personally had a conversation with every single volunteer so in this case I had a face-to-face talk with them for more than one hour and we were discussing about the whole experience, their feelings and talking a little bit more about their personal perception of the project, the program and the life in [the country].'

Avoiding problems and resolving them when they do occur could also be connected to good coordination and relationships between the HCO and the HO:

'I'm always in contact with the work coordinator from the hosting organisation who is in contact with the volunteers every single day. So then if in case anything happens then I'm contacted by the work coordinator or the volunteer itself.'

(c) Comprehensive training

Staff also frequently described the presence of comprehensive training processes and systems, which they sought to update regularly, both to include the latest thinking and information, but also to vary the content for the volunteers:

'We can say that it's well established now especially comparing with the more experienced national committees. Probably have more well-established trainings so we still experiment I would say. We have a solid base but we experiment a little bit. We also are open to experiments.'

'Our job is kind of like a teacher's job, it could be repetitive every year. So I try to incorporate new methods or new activities into each training.'

'We think that we will get bored to talk about the same thing, for example intercultural learning, stereotypes, the same topic, we always think about changing how we are doing it.'

5.3 Weaknesses of volunteer management and support systems

Staff of HCOs discussed a range of possible ways in which they felt their systems and processes for managing and supporting volunteers in the programme could be enhanced. In some cases this reflected what they saw as gaps in provision, but in others it could be a desire to expand the range of support in place.

(a) Detecting problems

Despite the comprehensiveness of the support systems between HCOs and volunteers, staff could acknowledge that it was sometimes difficult to detect when there were problems experienced by

volunteers, perhaps also reflecting the aforementioned point about the geographical location of the HCO's office:

'They always told us that they were fine. That they were happy with the experience. Suddenly they started having problems with their health so it was when we started having more conversations with them about how they were feeling about what they needed.'

(b) Resolving conflicts

This can also be the case with resolving conflicts. Again, while systems were in place which often appeared to be effective, sometimes the conflicts could be very challenging to manage and the systems in place may not be sufficient:

'Unfortunately, in this case we had two completely opposite versions so it was very difficult to decide how...to deal with it. We had two different opinions.'

(c) Timing of placements and induction

Challenges due to the system could sometimes relate to the timing of the EVS volunteering programme, which did not necessarily match up with the situation in the country, creating challenges for the volunteering activity and the volunteers' induction:

'In April, May [at the start of the volunteer placement], all the schools are closed. No children. They were alone and me and that other girl and that other guy.'

'When [the volunteers] arrived in the springtime, that's like outside of our normal cycle of volunteering because most of our volunteers arrive in August when we have the on-arrival training.'

Volunteers also described similar challenges brought on as a result of timing, as well as mentioning, albeit infrequently and only when prompted, some challenges around initial communication, induction, and placement set-up:

'I think the one thing I will remember is getting [a country] SIM card. Really. This one is just like, before I came I read a lot about that yes, it's hard. You will be sent from one office to another. I read this but going through this, an experience by myself. Oh, my goodness, it took a month at least to get the [country] SIM card.'

'Some volunteers³...they were coming here, they were not exactly sure what they're supposed to do here or like get the full description of the project of the tasks, how it is. But some volunteers, for example, when they arrived, we gave them information like even that, for example, they are supposed to have, they were not aware of most of the things.'

³ This quote refers to other volunteers in the HO that were not part of the study.

(d) Training and support

Again reflecting the earlier point about limited capacity within HCOs, there was sometimes a desire to do more, with one respondent noting how *'it would be nice to arrange more activities with the volunteers and visit them more often and support.'* This could also include a desire to have more networking events across the region, through both digital and face-to-face mechanisms, or to undertake more training, something that could be limited by a lack of resource.

As has been seen, the training on offer was often described positively, but staff also discussed ideas and opportunities to develop it further and make improvements:

'I would like to be able to invite external people to do it more, yeah, not just be me who's there like invite locals, invite people.'

'I think it would, it would be nice to refresh it more often and to change it. Not only for them but also for me because then it's more fun to do new stuff also and more, yeah different, not to repeat.'

'I would like to facilitate more intercultural learning trainings, like itself. I think it was very impactful for the participants of this training.'

One specific aspect of training and learning where improvements were felt to be possible was in relation to intercultural learning, although this was as much a recognition of its importance to their work and the volunteering as it was about potential deficiencies. It also recognised that while some interviewees described that they wanted to do more, they had all already been involved with intercultural learning training at some level:

'Doing the intercultural learning, I mean, the whole concept of skills and competences for our local volunteers could have been a really wonderful thing for them too to go through. That is something I would have wanted to do.'

'I would have wished to have more volunteers. Remember, like, how when we did the orientation we involved a few volunteers. I would like to do it on a larger scale, where we could have had more volunteers and had like three four days.'

(e) Monitoring and evaluation

Staff frequently said that they did not formally assess the skills and competences that volunteers gained. Instead, insight appeared to be gained through more informal, ongoing mechanisms, including discussions, although they did discuss mid- and end-of-placements evaluations.

'We could do more in like creating tools for the volunteers to reflect on their learning process and the mentors on how to support the learning process.'

'We are already thinking about doing something similar with our outgoing volunteers, for example, like interviewing them before departure and when they come back for example and

stuff like that. Because that will also help us to explain to people, like okay if you go abroad for a year, for example, then this will happen eventually to your skills and competences.'

While such comments potentially suggest an area for potential improvement, the informal approach may also suit the nature of the organisations and the way in which they work:

'But never like measuring percentages or taken figures or numbers exactly of how has it been but we normally do it in a, I would say, in an informal way. Which is very important for us. But we have never put them in numbers.'

6. Conclusions

6.1. Emerging conclusions

As was discussed at the start of this report, as the research took place towards the end of the volunteers' placements, the impacts and benefits outlined in this report are likely to be emergent, and could be quite different – or more pronounced – if the research was repeated further in to the future. They do nonetheless provide a useful insight in to how the programme has made a difference to the volunteers participating, as well as the organisations hosting and coordinating them. This section does not seek to repeat the content of this report, but identifies a number of important themes that have emerged from the study.

6.1.1 Volunteers experience important personal benefits

While the majority of impact discussed in this study is self-reported, it nonetheless frequently describes very significant benefits for the volunteers involved. Of particular importance appears to be the wide range of softer skills and competences gained, in a relatively short period of time, as a result of their volunteering placements. Impacts such as increased confidence and patience, and ability to manage stress and conflicts better are important life-skills and are likely to have a positive effect on their future careers, lives, and relationships.

It is perhaps worth noting, however, that the volunteers in this group tended to describe themselves in outgoing, more extroverted terms before the start of their placements. They often reported being comfortable with stressful situations and agreed with statements about wanting to have new experiences and challenges. As such, some of the impacts described are likely to be a consolidation of character traits that were in existence before their volunteering, although they still appear to be significant for the individual involved.

While positive impacts were overwhelmingly discussed in this research, this study has also shown that if something does not work effectively within the volunteering placement, the volunteer – and indeed the host organisation – is less likely to benefit and impacts will be more limited. This could include, for example, the sustained illness of a volunteer, a mismatch between expectations and the role, or personal problems between a volunteer and their line managers. Some of these challenges are unavoidable and simply need to be managed well reactively, but they are also a reminder of the importance of comprehensive systems to support and manage the volunteers.

6.1.2 Host organisations are able to deliver more

The main way in which host organisations benefitted from the involvement of volunteers was an increased ability to deliver more services, to more people, and to new areas in some instances, allowing them to have a greater impact and deliver more outputs. This is not to negate some of the important softer benefits brought by volunteers, such as companionship and friendships with the beneficiaries, but practically, it would not have been possible to deliver some services without the support and involvement of the volunteers.

In other cases, the presence of the volunteers allowed the host organisation to expand their offer and provide new activities. Some of the volunteers brought with them completely new skill sets, creativity,

and energy, which the host organisation could utilise to introduce new – and often unplanned – ways to support their beneficiaries. Some of these new activities, such as art and dance sessions, became a legacy of the volunteer’s time, with the host organisation (HO) having strategically and practically changed their offer to beneficiaries as a result of the input of the volunteers.

6.1.3 The cultural exchange element remains strong

Impacts around intercultural exchange were an important element of the volunteers’ experiences. The nature of the placements, in particular living with a host family, quickly and intensively exposed them to life in another country and culture, something which they learned a great deal from. This study shows the potential of volunteering programmes such as this for broadening perspectives and challenging stereotypes, as well as providing an important opportunity to reflect on their own culture. It is also likely to have an impact on their future careers, with volunteers often discussing how their experiences had pushed them in new directions (this would be of particular interest to track in the future – see recommendations in section 6.2).

In this context, the exchange element to the volunteering programme was also important; it was not just volunteers from the North spending time in the South, but also involved volunteers from Honduras, Colombia, India and Indonesia spending time in Europe, giving an extra dimension to the intercultural element.

6.1.4 Good volunteer management and support is vital

Impact on volunteers – and indeed on the host organisations – cannot be considered in isolation from the support structures that were in place for the volunteers. While this study has not intended to evaluate the effectiveness of these support structures and neither has it sought to connect the quality of support to the depth of impact experienced, it frequently observed a comprehensive system in which the HO and the HCO seek to support the volunteers as effectively as possible. The roles of each organisation were clearly defined and they frequently described detailed approaches to supporting volunteers in everyday situations as well as examples when things had become more challenging, such as conflicts. In spite of this, areas which could be improved were also commonly mentioned, representing a desire to further enhance the volunteer experience and a recognition that limited resources meant that some gaps could be evident.

6.2 Recommendations for ICYE, host organisations, and host coordinating organisations

6.2.1 Build in time for reflection on volunteer management processes

HOs often appeared to lack time to reflect on their processes for involving and supporting volunteers, assessing what could be improved. This study provided a useful opportunity for them to do so, taking a step back from their daily activities, with many respondents discussing areas for improvement. While acknowledging that HOs often lack time and resources to do this, it would nonetheless be advantageous to build in regular opportunities – quarterly or annually – for strategic and practical reviews of the volunteer support if this is not already done.

6.2.2 Monitor and track past volunteers to better understand impact

It is of course challenging to maintain regular contact with volunteers after they’ve completed their placement, but some HOs and HCOs said that they did with some volunteers, albeit informally. In doing so, it would be highly beneficial to assess longer-term impact, perhaps six or 12 months after

completing their placement. Asking volunteers at a later point about the impact of their volunteering on their career choices and outlook could yield rich data that would help ICYE and its partners better understand the holistic impact of the programme. It is worth noting, however, that while HCOs and HOs saw the value of this, they could also warn against over-formalising such tracking and placed a value in the informal processes they had for communicating with their volunteers. Careful thought should therefore be given to the particular approach that could be used, and whether qualitative interviews and conversations would be more appropriate than regular quantitative surveys or other forms of data collection.

6.2.3 Seek feedback from volunteers more proactively

HCOs often described the challenges of maintaining regular contact with the volunteers once they were on placement, largely as a result of their location and the geographical challenges of seeing them regularly. As such, this could make it hard to detect when problems emerged in placements, something that could be compounded by volunteers saying everything was ok when in reality problems may have begun to emerge. Despite having specified points of contact with volunteers, HCOs often tended to rely on a reactive process, responding to volunteers' concerns when they came to them. Some HCOs, however, did discuss seemingly effective ways to ensure they understood the current situation of the volunteers, including building in informal reviews and feedback in to more informal conversations. It would therefore be beneficial for HCOs to explore further opportunities and mechanisms to monitor and detect problems with volunteers proactively, in the context of limited time and budget resources.

6.2.4 Give more consideration to volunteer placement start times

In several instances, HOs and HCOs described challenges brought about by volunteers starting their placements at a time when schools were closed or that did not coincide with their annual training programme, which could create problems for the start of the placement. While volunteering programmes such as EVS do not always allow for flexibility regarding start dates, wherever possible it would be beneficial to ensure volunteers began their placements at times which suited the HO's annual timetable and would therefore allow for the volunteer to have the greatest possible impact.

Annex A. Description of the host organisations

This annex provides a description of the ten host organisations (HOs) involved in the project. None have been named and identifying factors have been removed.

Organisation 1, Colombia

This organisation was founded to support people affected by poverty and violence, addressing most disadvantaged people. The organisation supports more than 200 people in programme such as soup kitchens, schools for parents and psychological help.

Organisation 2, India

This organisation provides education to underprivileged children in and around a major city. It has three programmes: a school, a teacher training programme and a life skills programme for young adults. It is a weekly residential school that offers an adaptable curriculum responding to the individual needs of children. At present, it provides education to more than 60 children between the ages of 8 and 18 years.

Organisation 3, Brazil

This organisation provides alternative education and social opportunities for children and adolescents under social risk from three to 19 years and for elderly people in the neighbourhood. Its main aim is to promote children and adolescents' physical integrity, intellectual and emotional growth and a happy childhood in a safe environment. It assists about 1,500 people in the community and provides psychological and pedagogic counselling, an internet point, library, dentistry assistance, legal and psychological support for the families, and more. It also organises a range of activities and workshops for the community, including sports, IT, language lessons, dance, art workshops, theatre, ecological workshops, music, and capoeira.

Organisation 4, Honduras

This organisation focuses on the creation and growth of homes, programmes, and support networks for people with intellectual disabilities. It has two communities (homes) in the country. Its main aim is to offer people with intellectual disabilities a family environment that encourages them to create a home, develop skills and talents and build friendships. They offer diverse workshops, for example making different kitchen materials such as tablecloths, mittens, and candles.

Organisation 5, Nigeria

This organisation works with young people, their parents, the community, opinion leaders, youth organisations and government agencies to: promote skill acquisition in various communities and provide training and empower young adults in skills acquisition; increase community awareness and action on challenges faced by youth so that policies and programmes are put in place to address these issues; and build alliances to increase the number of government, private sector and civil society programmes offering support and life-enhancing opportunities for young people.

Organisation 6, Kenya

This home provides basic needs for children with intellectual and physical challenges, assisting the children in cleaning, feeding, and dressing, as well as providing basic education depending on their disability. There are about 30 employees and volunteers in the home, who take care of more than fifty children. The home also runs a school in a local slum, where the volunteers support teachers in the classroom.

Organisation 7, Poland

This organisation helps young people with different backgrounds to develop personally and socially. It provides different activities such as: sending young people for short-term group voluntary service (workcamps), mid-term and long-term voluntary service (former EVS Programme, ESC and ICYE programmes); organising trainings for national and international participants; and organising local youth projects.

Organisation 8, Finland

This is a non-profit non-governmental association, providing housing, education and work activity services for adults with learning and intellectual disabilities. It provides services to approximately 100 individuals and their families. There are approximately 60 people in the workforce, including paid staff, non-professionals, civil servants, volunteers, and students.

Organisation 9, Finland

This is a community which provides opportunities for people with learning disabilities, mental health conditions and other special needs to live, learn and work together with others. The organisation provides possibilities for people with special needs to work and live as active members of the countryside community. There are about 25 - 30 members in the community.

Organisation 10, Austria

This is a residential home for approximately 25 adults with multiple disabilities. It offers the clients housing, (re)integration in the surrounding society by offering leisure time activities, and a workplace through training in the practice rooms.

Annex B. Baseline survey to volunteers

Dear volunteer,

We would be grateful if you would complete this questionnaire which will help ICYE to get information and assess the impact of your volunteering at the end of your EVS service period. Your names will remain confidential and will not be published or shared with others. The questionnaire takes about 20 minutes to complete. We thank you in advance for your help!

Personal data

Male:

Female:

Other

Age:

Country of origin:

When will you start your Voluntary Service abroad in [add host country]?

Month / year:

- I. **What was your main motivation for volunteering abroad?**
- II. **What do you think are your strengths and weaknesses?**
- III. **Problem Solving (public/common)**

How do you react when you are confronted with a (complex) problem?

Tick one or more of the following options in the box on the left:

<input type="checkbox"/>	I confront the situation and tackle it head on (<i>conflict type-theory</i>)
<input type="checkbox"/>	I rather leave it (<i>conflict type-theory</i>)
<input type="checkbox"/>	I feel the responsibility to solve the problem
<input type="checkbox"/>	I take time to analyse and understand the nature of the problem (<i>reflection</i>)
<input type="checkbox"/>	I strive to look at problems from different perspectives and generate multiple solutions (<i>empathy</i>)
<input type="checkbox"/>	I seek advice and/or involve others in resolving the problem
<input type="checkbox"/>	When I solve a problem, I consider similar past experiences/past effective solutions (<i>experience</i>)
<input type="checkbox"/>	I try to prevent that the problem becomes bigger (<i>prevention</i>)

IV. **Critical thinking** (thinking for yourself, being creative, objective, independent, reasonable, considering all perspectives – empathy: perspective taking)

Tick one or more of the following options in the box on the left:

	I don't usually pay attention to what people think of me (<i>thinking for yourself /independent thinking</i>)
	I usually follow the mainstream positions / majority positions
	I usually swim against the current / usually take another position from the majority/mainstream
	I consider myself to be a creative person
	I try to understand other people's opinions even when they differ from mine (<i>empathy: perspective taking</i>)

V. **People management** (support network, leadership, organization) and coordinating others (team work)?

Tick one or more of the following options in the box on the left:

	I like to take the lead / I have leadership/coaching experience
	I have experience working with people from different cultural backgrounds
	I can easily delegate tasks
	I like to motivate other people
	I am good at listening
	I look to others for support (<i>creating teams</i>)
	I consider myself to be a team player / I like to work with others in a team
	I like to work alone

VI. **Judgment and decision-making**

Tick one or more of the following options in the box on the left:

	I carefully reflect on/think about an issue before I act or take decisions
	Sometimes I act or take decisions spontaneously without reflecting on/thinking about the issue a great deal
	I do not like to take decisions
	I don't like to decide for others
	Before I take a decision, I evaluate the risks and think of different alternatives
	I have a strong gut instinct/feelings and I rely on it
	I am often surprised at the consequences of my decision/action
	Once I take a decision, I don't change my mind
	I rely on my own experiences when I take decision
	I consult others when I take decisions
	I try to convince others of the decision I take
	I don't like long decision-making processes

VII. **Service orientation** (solidarity, being helpful/willingness, cooperative, sense of responsibility)

Tick one or more of the following options in the box on the left:

	I like to be helpful
	I like to share responsibility with others
	I am concerned about other people's well being
	I prefer not to involve myself in other people's issues
	I am happy to involve myself in social causes / movements / issues
	I believe that every person is responsible for his/her own well-being

VIII. **Negotiation** (reconcile/compromise/conflict resolution)

Tick one or more of the following options in the box on the left:

	I always try to convince others of my opinions
	I give in easily to keep the peace even if the outcome is not in my favour
	I always try to compromise / seek consensus (I propose a middle ground/I try to find a fair combination of gain and losses for both or all parties concerned)
	I take other people's opinion/positions in consideration
	I can take criticism well / If someone tells me I am wrong or have to change my behaviour/style of working, etc., I take this feedback well
	I try to avoid conflicts (I don't like conflicts)

IX. **Cognitive Flexibility** (multi-tasking/change concepts/changing tasks)

Tick one or more of the following options in the box on the left:

	I like/ I am able to work on several tasks simultaneously
	I prefer to tackle tasks one after the other (one at a time)
	I don't mind switching between tasks abruptly
	I think I am a fast learner
	I need some time and space to learn and execute tasks
	I am dogmatic/I always follow the rules and assert my opinions

X. **Stress management:**

Tick one or more of the following options in the box on the left:

	I don't react well to stress
	I am used to handling stressful situations
	I like challenges / challenging situations because they offer an opportunity to learn
	I have ways to relax in stressful situations / I can control my levels of stress
	I seek the support of others in stressful situations

1. **How would you define a stressful situation?** Please give an example.
2. **What stresses you the most? What are the main stress factors for you?** Please give examples.
3. **What helps you to overcome stress?** Please give examples of techniques or strategies or actions that help you relieve stress.

XI. Communication skills

Tick one or more of the following options in the box on the left:

<input type="checkbox"/>	When I do not understand something, I tend to keep it to myself and try to figure it out later
<input type="checkbox"/>	I have problems expressing myself
<input type="checkbox"/>	I openly communicate my feelings / I talk to others about my feelings
<input type="checkbox"/>	I tend to say what I think without considering how others may perceive it / understand it / feel about it
<input type="checkbox"/>	When talking to people, I take notice of their body language
<input type="checkbox"/>	Before I communicate, I think about what the person needs to know to understand the message
<input type="checkbox"/>	I am willing and/or able to change my way of communication depending on the setting/culture I am in (more verbal, or more non-verbal, more textual, more oral)
<input type="checkbox"/>	I am aware of cultural barriers when I communicate

1. Indicate your language skills [language of host country] at this point in time.

- Beginner
- Basic
- Fluent
- I don't know

2. How motivated are you to learn the host country language?

- Not applicable
- Not interested
- Basic understanding of the language is enough for me
- I want to be able to understand and respond to people in my host country
- I want to be able to speak the language fluently
- I want to be able to speak, read and write in the language proficiently

XII. **Organisational skills** (taking initiative, setting and meeting goals, planning and running activities, time management – other organisational skills are covered in the earlier points)

Tick one or more of the following options in the box on the left:

	I like to set goals and see them become a reality / I like to take the initiative and develop my own ideas for activities
	I feel overburdened/stressed if I have to left to develop my own ideas for activities
	I go with the flow and don't think it is important to set goals
	I am a planner and like to take on the responsibility of running activities
	I am not much of a planner and prefer to leave the responsibility of running activities to others

Annex C. Topic guides for interviews

C.1 Volunteer

Part A - Human / Personal Impact (knowledge, skills and wellbeing of people - impact on the volunteer or on others because of the volunteer's presence)

1. Why did you want to participate in the programme?

Guidance question: What was your main motivation for volunteering abroad?

2. What do you think you have achieved during your stay in host country?

Tips: personal or professional examples, both specific and general examples are fine

3. What kind of problems did you experience during your stay in your host country? Have you been able to resolve these? How?

Tips: feeling alone, homesick, problems at work, language barrier

4. Did you find out something about yourself that you did not expect?

Tips: attitudes, awareness, competences, interest in something new, new strengths and/or weaknesses

5. What skills do you think you have gained? What have you learnt and what have you gained?

Tips: problem-solving, managing people, negotiation and conflict resolution, communication, organisational skills, multi-tasking, language etc.

6. In which areas of personal and professional life do you feel more competent now than you did before you voluntary service?

Tips: coping with stress, decision-making, independence, self-confidence, leadership, perspective-taking.

7. Have your plans for the future changed during your time in your host country?

8. Please describe your best experience during your volunteering time.

Tips: Encourage volunteer to talk but be aware of time

Part B - Social Impact (the interpersonal relationships that develop between people because of the voluntary service)

9. Did your social network change during your stay abroad? In what way?

Tips: Explain that by social network you mean friends, colleagues, host family, other people you interacted with.

Guidance questions:

(a) Did you make new friends?

(b) Was it easy or difficult to meet new people and make friends?

10. How did you contribute to the work of your host project?

Guidance questions:

(a) What were your tasks / activities?

(b) Do you feel your contribution was recognised? Please explain how.

(c) Do you think that you have learnt something, what and how?

11. What is your perception of the situation of the beneficiaries / people in your host project?

PART C - Cultural Impact (change in perceptions of identity, awareness of one's self and others - individual, group, national cultures)

12. How did your time in your host country make you reflect on your culture / cultural background and behaviour?

Tips: perception of time, social relations, food

13. Have the interactions with beneficiaries, staff, community, etc. changed the way you look at and react in relation to social issues, human rights?

Tips: Name a memorable experience or situation that made an impression on you, e.g. relating to gender roles, disadvantaged groups, social class, etc.

14. Has your presence (as someone from a different culture or background) at the project influenced beneficiaries, staff and community members' views and opinions in any way?

At the end of the interview

15. Would you like to add something? Do you have any questions?

Part A – General Information

1. Does your organisation have a volunteer manager/contact person for the volunteer?

Yes

No

2. On average, how many hours a week did the volunteer work in your organisation?

Please check any one box:

Less than 10 hours

10 – 20 hours

20 – 30 hours

30 – 40 hours

More than 40 hours

Part B - Human / Personal Impact on the volunteer (knowledge, skills and wellbeing of people)

3. In the following we ask you to assess some of the volunteer's competences.

a. Indicate the volunteer's language [language of the host country] skills on arrival

Beginner

Basic

Fluent

I don't know

b. Indicate the volunteer's general communication skills (other than language) on arrival.

Very limited

Limited

Fair

Good

Very good

I don't know

c. Has the volunteer's language skills improved over the voluntary service period?

Yes

No (Jump to point 16)

I don't know (Jump to point 16)

d. Have the improved language skills enabled the volunteer to take on more challenging tasks?

- Yes
 No
 I don't know

e. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the volunteer.
 Please check one box for each statement.

Statements	Don't know (0)	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
The volunteer has become more outgoing						
The volunteer has become more self-confident						
The volunteer has become more comfortable speaking [National host language]						

4. Did the volunteer experience any problems or conflicts during his/her stay in your country?
 Was s/he able to resolve them?

Tips: feeling alone, homesick, problems at work, language barrier

5. What skills do you think the volunteer gained?

Tips: problem-solving, managing people, negotiation and conflict resolution, communication, organisational skills, multitasking, language, etc.

6. In which areas of work do you feel the volunteer is more competent now than at the start of the voluntary service?

Tips: coping with stress, decision-making, independence, self-confidence, leadership, perspective-taking, etc.

7. Could you mention one achievement of the volunteer or an area of work or event in which s/he performed well?

Part C – Physical / Material Impact on the host project (the interpersonal relationships that develop between people because of the voluntary service)

In the following questions we ask about what the international volunteer's stay has meant for you and your organisation.

8. Was the volunteer able to attend activities in the local community outside of your organisation?

Yes

Please give some examples

No

11. How was the relationship between you and the volunteer?

Very distant

Distant

Neutral

Close

Very close

Not spent any time with the volunteer

12. How was the relationship between the volunteer and the students/beneficiaries/children?

Very distant

Distant

Neutral

Close

Very close

I don't know

13. How was the relationship between the volunteer and the staff in general?

Very distant

Distant

Neutral

Close

Very close

I don't know

14. What did your organisation (and beneficiaries) gain from the volunteer?

Yes Please specify how or what area:

No

**15. Has the international volunteer’s stay led to any new ideas or initiatives in your organisation?
If so, please indicate in which area(s).**

Yes Please specify how or what area:

No

16. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements. If you have had more than one international volunteer in your organisation, please give us an overall assessment.

Please use a scale from 1 – 5 to rate your answers. Please check one box for each statement.

Statements	Don't know (0)	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
The volunteer has had a positive effect on the staff						
The staff have, in general, given the volunteer opportunities to talk about his or her home country						
The staff have spent their free time with the volunteer, e.g. on trips, vacations or weekends						
The students/clients/children have learned about the volunteer’s home country						
The volunteer has had a positive effect on the students/clients/children						

17. What challenges did you face with regard to the volunteer?

At the end of the interview

Do you have any further comments or experiences with the volunteer that you wish to share?

C.3 Host coordinating organisation

1. What support measures do you have in place for your volunteers? (e.g. mentor, multiplier of the project, volunteer coordinator, trainings, other activities, former volunteer groups, etc.)
2. How often do you contact the volunteer? (on the phone, by email and in person)
3. How do you monitor the (learning) progress of the volunteer?
4. Who runs the intercultural learning trainings in your organisation? (e.g. staff in charge of hosting, board members, external trainers, etc.)
 - a. For this project.
 - b. For all your other volunteering programmes.
5. What material do you use to prepare for your intercultural learning trainings? (e.g. ICYE Practical Guide, other handbooks or toolkits – please specify which handbooks, toolkits, etc.)
6. Do you use the same approach, methods, toolkits, handbooks, etc. each time or do you try out new approaches, tools and methods?
7. How do you ensure and maintain the quality of your intercultural trainings?
8. Do you organise additional activities (other than the activities of the project) for your volunteers to support their reflection and learning on intercultural learning, human rights, etc.? Please specify the activities that you organise.
9. Do your volunteers have the opportunity to attend events and activities of your local network of organisations / other local NGOs?
10. What happens when there is conflict situation between the volunteer and the host project? What steps do you take to resolve the situation? Whom do you involve to resolve the conflict?
11. How do you support volunteers who are homesick and/or are not motivated to work at the host project? Whom do you involve to support the volunteer?
12. Have you in the past assessed the skills and competences and learning outcomes of your volunteers? If yes, how? What tools did you use?

Contact

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