



European Voluntary Service Future Search Conference

Enhanced Perspectives for
Transnational Volunteering for Youth

03.- 05. July 2017
Tallinn, Estonia



The “**European Voluntary Service Future Search (EVS) conference - enhances perspectives for transnational volunteering for youth in Europe**” on 3-5 July 2017 in Tallinn, Estonia

The purpose of the Conference was to explore the essence of EVS so far and shape the future of volunteering opportunities for youth to meet the needs, current realities and dreams of young people and Europe.

The conference was held in association with the Estonian presidency of the Council of the EU and organised by Estonian National Agency in cooperation with the Austrian, French and German National Agencies of Erasmus+ in the field of Youth.

More than 150 stakeholders including EVS organisations, National Authorities, Erasmus+ National Agencies, young volunteers and European networks representatives met for focused discussions on the new ambition, innovative perspectives and strategy building. In the frame of a larger strategic approach to build a vision for the future, a [“Foresight paper”](#) was developed prior to the Conference. The conference offered stakeholders also the opportunity to discuss the links between Erasmus+ European Voluntary Service and the European Solidarity Corps.

Summary of the key messages from the Conference:

- The EU funded transnational volunteering opportunities should aim to **connect** the **youngsters** interest, learning aspirations and potential with the **needs of developing cohesive societies** in Europe and beyond. This calls for **participatory needs assessment of local community** when designing the placement and linking it with the aspirations of the volunteer.
- It is important that the **value and possibilities for volunteering** including the learning opportunity it provides **are promoted amongst youth** and **supported at all levels**. It is imperative to involve young people (with their needs and interests) in shaping the transnational volunteering opportunities.
- **No youngster should face obstacles in engaging** in local, national or transnational **volunteering**. Keeping a low threshold (simple and flexible) in accessing the possibilities is of utmost importance. **Particular conditions** to guarantee access to and participation of **young people with special needs and fewer opportunities** must be established. At the same time pedagogical support based on diversity principles and the participation of organisations working with diverse target groups of young people needs to be ensured.

- The current **ESC proposal is focusing on the EU member states only** and thus excludes the **EFTA-, associated and partner countries** participating in Erasmus+ Youth in Action. In terms of solidarity with this proposal the EU **sends out a counter-productive signal**. All affected countries are targeted by policy strategies of the EU and have played an important role in the implementation of Erasmus+ Youth in Action already for years. The same cross-border voluntary activities so far carried out as EVS would now be divided which **interrupts** an until now **successful and established programme implementation**.
- The **quality of transnational volunteering placements** need reaffirming in terms of accreditation (quality control and monitoring mechanism) and ensured support system (fully fledged training & evaluation cycle for organisations and volunteers).
- **Recognising the contribution of organisations** active in the field of transnational volunteering for youth is very important and their **work should be adequately resourced**.
- The **effective use of funds to provide meaningful experiences for as many young people as possible** should be in focus. Creation of the meaningful experience has to be based on the profile of the volunteer and often needs a long term approach. It is critical to find a **sufficient length** for the **volunteering experience to impact the volunteer as well as the local community** where it is taking place.
- **Sustainable volunteering pathways** should be encouraged and supported through **connecting local and transnational volunteering opportunities**. Transition, Alumni networking and follow-up support should be offered by support structures to volunteers before, during and after their transnational experiences.
- **Flexibility in formats** of volunteering (long-term, short-term, individual and team, online, free time volunteering, mixed in terms of local and international, etc) **increase volunteering popularity** amongst youngsters and facilitate their active participation.
- Giving priority to youth volunteering should **not undermine the importance of other youth activities** (youth exchanges, youth initiatives and structured dialogue projects) as **ecosystem** of young person's development in **Erasmus+: Youth In Action**.
- **'Smart' (digital) transnational volunteering opportunities and support tools for learning, recognition and validation** of learning should be put in place in combination with face to face support measures (information, guidance, mentorship).
- Recognition, accessibility, safety and quality of volunteering calls for **establishing a European Status for Volunteers** that needs further mainstreaming to national policies on volunteering. A wide EU strategy aiming at creating, enabling and empowering environment for volunteering in Europe should be developed and implemented.
- Any complications and difference in conditions or procedures must be avoided when **parallel programmes (Erasmus+ and ESC) in supporting transnational volunteering** projects is implemented. Quality accreditation system must be maintained. **Fast-track grant award** procedure should be put in place.

The outcomes of the Conference will be compiled for further strategic use. More information and documentation will be found at [Conference website](#) in the coming weeks.