

EVS project in Bulgaria

“Become a volunteer! Change the World!”

2016 – 2017

Caution! Might be life-changing!



Dear future volunteers!

Our project “**Become a Volunteer! Change the World!**” has already started and we are looking for three motivated volunteers from **Estonia, Poland and Romania** who will be hosted in **Blagoevgrad** at the same time for a period of **6 months/** starting date: **20 November 2016**, end date: **22 May 2017/**.

Objectives of the project:

- To take **3 young people**, aged between **17 - 30 years old**, who are unemployed, quit or excluded from the formal education system in our organization for a period of 6 months each;
- to improve their **professional skills, knowledge and competences** so that after their **EVS** project , they will have higher chances for professional realization on the labour market;
- **to help with the professional orientation** of the young people in Europe, in order to increase their chances to find a job;
- to promote **youth employment** in the **European Union**, while enhancing their **skills and qualifications**, with special emphasis on **combating youth unemployment**;
- to promote European youth programs;
- to provide our volunteers with competences in **non-formal and informal education** and training / during the voluntary service they will develop practical skills for working with groups

- facilitating group processes, discussions, debates, trainings, public speaking, management of youth projects and many others/;
- to develop entrepreneurial and leadership skills of the participants as important aspects needed in the labor market;
- to encourage the **active participation of young people** in public life and to **inspire them to act as multipliers** of the new knowledge and skills **in their local communities**;
- To improve participants' skills for project development, management and implementation in the youth field.
- to boost the skills of young people for self-realization in the labour market.

Project context:

Each volunteer will work in an international team/from 5 countries/, under the direct supervision and guidance of their coordinator, will support our team and will help us to implement our current projects and initiatives.

The project already started and our current volunteers are working on several local projects together with some of our interns, high-school students and volunteers in our organization. One of the local initiatives is in the social house, working with orphans and Roma kids, teaching them English and organizing different games and activities to develop their creativity and skills.

Another local project is with 3 local high-schools and 2 universities, organizing presentations for young people in Blagoevgrad, raising awareness about **Erasmus+** opportunities, **EVS Programme**, and volunteering in general.

Also, the volunteers will have the chance to organize their own themed clubs where they will present their hobbies, organize discussions and debates, presentation about their country, culture, language, customs, traditions etc. This will give them the opportunity to unleash their potential and realize their ideas.

Also, we involve the volunteers who are interested, in the project development and implementation work, empowering them and giving them the chance to develop their own project ideas.

We try to involve our volunteers in all our local and international projects, as giving them the chance to improve their personal and inter-personal skills by the method: learning by doing.

Volunteers participating in the project will learn how to build relationships with coworkers, to work in a team and independently, take on the initiative and responsibility for the realization of a particular action. With so shaped objectives and results of the project, volunteers will be able to be fully and consciously involved in the life of local communities, act as representatives and leaders embody their own initiative, to represent a region or organization on a wider arena.

Methodology:

The project focuses on exchange of experience and knowledge between partner organizations, volunteers and our team, and the principles of non-formal education. **Priority** will be **to work based on experience, competencies and interests** of the volunteers. They will be the **main**

actors of the learning process. The main part of the voluntary service will be in the form of methods of **learning by doing**, which will lead to the improvement and acquiring new knowledge, skills and competences for the volunteers in the field of **non-formal and a self-reflection methods, self-development** and organizing social initiatives, different campaigns, for their **personal and professional development**. The difference in nationalities will be considered as a resource for building up some basic key skills and competences among the participants, as well as promoting the **inter-cultural dialogue**. Thus, the volunteers will develop new attitudes, as well as some behaviors that will inspire **confidence** and will **equip** them with the **necessary characteristics** to **find a job**.

Impact:

We firmly believe that our project will improve and support the development of:

- the skills to develop youth projects and the importance of them to the society;
- skills to work in a team;
- abilities for self-expression through creativity and innovativeness, as well as the language skills for communication in a foreign language/English and Bulgarian, as well as in their mother tongue
- the volunteer's sense of independence by facing the new environment on their own;
- awareness of inter- cultural integration and dialogue;
- the establishment of **European values**, sense of **solidarity** and **tolerance** among young people;
- **respect towards** the personal and intercultural **diversity**.

The effect in the different levels will be:

- **Breaking the stereotypes** and the **prejudices** in the society about volunteering;
- Intercultural dialogue - by getting to know a new culture, traditions and customs;
- Promotion of Erasmus + European youth projects and opportunities for young people;
- Inclusion of a higher number of young people in voluntary campaigns and initiatives;
- Better visibility and promotion of the EVS program;
- Volunteering as a social inclusion.

The impact of the project in the **international level** will be:

- Better visibility for **Erasmus+** and **EVS Programme**;
- Reduce youth unemployment in the EU in the long run by increasing the skills and competencies of young people;
- Promotion of volunteering in the EU;
- activating and motivating the young people.

EVS project "Become a Volunteer! Change the World!" has several main goals. The **first goal** is help preparing young people for entering the labor market. **Volunteers**, through participation in the project will have the opportunity to work in an international environment. Intercultural skills, new languages, teamwork, conscious approach to global issues that we are facing nowadays, responsibility are just a few of many features that will be developed.

The next main goal is to have monthly visits to local schools and universities, providing information to the local community about the **EVS and Erasmus+ Program**, holding presentations in the region which will bring mutual benefits. It will develop some key competences and soft skills such as public speaking, organizational skills, teamwork, etc.

We are also **Eurodesk multiplier**, so the future volunteers will have the opportunity to explore the Eurodesk online database and provide information to local youth who are interested.

Also, if there are interested people in our city, the volunteers can organize a free language course as a social initiative to the local community.



Insurance:

Please consider that the sending organization has to register you in CIGNA insurance for volunteer. Volunteers have to be acquainted with insurance rules before arrival.

Travel costs:

- Please consider that we can use only the cheapest way of transport: by plane, train or by bus.
- Remember please that you can spend money on tickets 1 month before start of volunteer activity, not earlier.
- Please keep original tickets/invoices/boarding cards as they are needed for reimbursement purposes.
- Please make sure that travel documents include date of purchase as well.
- Please send us the approximate cost of transport to Sofia and from Sofia and please do NOT buy tickets before our confirmation.
- As soon as you know your arrival date/time inform us so we can arrange picking you up from airport/station.

The total travel budget for a round trip for each participant is **275 euro**.

Host organization:

We are good, friendly guys, open- minded, ex- EVS volunteers, who look for highly motivated positive person for our team. Anyways, if you want to know more about the serious stuff from us, read the longer description of our organization below.

Active Bulgarian Society /ABS/ mainly focuses on cooperation with Bulgarian and foreign youth organizations to exchange experience in the field of education, culture, youth issues in the context of euro integration process, promote dialogue between young people from EU member states and candidate countries.

We work in the field of mobility learning such as organizing and being partners in many training courses, youth exchanges, volunteer initiatives, active European citizenship activities, sport, cultural, social, seminars, and conferences.

ABS works mainly with youth workers, non-profit organizations, social workers and citizens from the European Union and the partner countries.

ABS is based in Blagoevgrad and we cooperate successfully with the public institutions, universities, other local and foreign NGOs mainly in the field of non-formal and informal education and active youth participation.

ABS was partner and organizer of projects with youth workers, young leaders, youngsters with fewer opportunities and youth from disadvantaged background.

We organize projects on youth leadership, entrepreneurship, active citizenship, education through sport methodology, intercultural dialogue, management of human resources and others.

ABS has strong partner cooperation with organizations from all the EU and partner countries.

Since 2016 we are Eurodesk Multiplier for our region. This help us to inform, guide and empower young people from our region to participate in learning mobility programmes and encourage them to become active citizens.

ABS has large experience with organizing eco-initiatives, volunteer campaigns, debates on topical issues, happenings, flash mobs in Blagoevgrad, training courses, intercultural dialogue projects and other events where we try to foster interest and active participation of young leaders and youth workers from our region.

Moreover, **ABS** has cooperated successfully in many projects in the field of learning mobility as sending participants and preparing young people for better employability.

ABS has implemented very successfully already several similar international training courses by that time in **Bulgaria** and is about to prepare others once the results of the selection process become official. All partner associations with whom ABS has worked so far expressed positive feedback regarding our work for hosting youth workers mobility project and ABS will be keeping the standards of its work in order to bring even better quality of our future projects.

Till **2018 ABS** is EVS accredited to send, coordinate and host up to 2 volunteers at the same time. Currently, the organization is working in enlarging its scope and activities.

Last but not least, **Active Bulgarian Society** is one of the key **Y-E-N / R-E-J** members. Since its creation **23 years ago**, **Y-E-N / R-E-J** has organized more than 100 international projects bringing together social workers, youth workers and young people with fewer opportunities to engage in social inclusion. More than 5000 youth and social workers have participated and been trained in our events.



The key **staff** of **ABS** has wide experience in the field of learning mobility; we all are fluent in English. All the staff has long term experience working in international environment or in foreign companies.

In ABS we try to create pro-active attitudes towards social inclusion and global issues in our local society; to encourage participation and involvement of young people in social processes and to develop practical skills in non-formal and informal education through different methods (conferences, meetings with local representatives of the state, flash mobs, etc.).



Active Bulgarian Society facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/ActiveBulgarianSociety/>

Email: ABSociety.info@gmail.com

About Blagoevgrad:

If you've never heard of Blagoevgrad, you're in for a pleasant surprise. The Rough Guide to Bulgaria named the town the 'coolest place in southwest Bulgaria,' and with good reason. It's a small, vibrant university town (20,000 of the 80,000 residents are students!) within easy reach of the capital Sofia (a 1hr drive or easy bus ride away.) Blagoevgrad is home to two universities, the South-West University "Neofit Rilski" and the American University in Bulgaria.

There's something for everyone in Blagoevgrad; the restored old quarter bustles with cafes and bars in a lively cultural scene set against beautiful architecture.



In town you'll be spoilt with 2.5km of leafy park alley for strolling, a fascinating historical museum and a rich program of events. Nightclubs, opera, restaurants and over 100 theater performances per year keep the lively population entertained.

It's easy to get away and experience some of Bulgaria's most stunning natural attractions too: the spa town of Sandanski, the Seven Lakes of Rila and two world class ski resorts (Bansko and Borovets) are close by. There are biking adventures to be had around town, and fans of hiking can take in some breathtaking views on foot.

For those seeking adventures further afield, you'll be happy to find Macedonia on the doorstep (30km) and the delights of Greece only an hour's drive away (84km).



Life in Bulgaria

Bulgaria is located in Southeast Europe, in the northeast part of the Balkan Peninsula. Bordered by the Black Sea to the east and the Danube to the north, Bulgaria shares borders with Turkey, Greece, Macedonia, Serbia and Romania. The climate is temperate with increasingly short, cool winters and long, dry summers.

As you'd expect, this puts this sunny, pleasant land in a unique position at the crossroads of civilizations, both modern and ancient. Lifestyle and culture in what is now Bulgaria have developed over thousands of years—indeed, Bulgaria is the origin of the most ancient civilized societies in Europe.

Although it may seem that in some rural villages, time has stood still (it's common to see elderly villagers plowing with a donkey and tending their sheep and goats), Bulgaria is a modern, forward-thinking country with a strong culture of innovation in its expanding business centers. A member of the European Union since 2007, Bulgaria has emerged from the shadow of Communism to take its place as a democratic, safe, hospitable destination ripe with economic opportunity, a developing tourism industry and beautiful natural resources.

Bulgaria is one of the most diverse countries in Europe, and its relatively compact size and accessible highway system means you can travel from seaside to ski slope in a single day. With many hiking trails, protected sites of historic interest, spas, wine trails and opportunities for eco-tourism and adventure sports, Bulgaria is one of Europe's most exciting, hospitable (and affordable) destinations. The food is fresh and delicious too!

Weather in Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria:

Blagoevgrad is said to be one of the sunniest cities in Bulgaria.

As the weather here can be quite unpredictable, to get the best out of your Bulgarian experience it is important to include both an umbrella and sunglasses, necessary equipment all year long, so warm clothes for winter time and some things for summer time.

The climate is transitional continental with a strong Mediterranean influence, due to air masses that enter from the south valley of the Struma river. The city is protected from cold northerly winds due to the natural barrier of the high hills of Rila massifs.

During the autumn and spring the weather is often changeable – you are likely to enjoy moderately warm temperatures from April to June and from September to October, but it is also possible to see snow in April or people wearing short-sleeves in October. The weather in Bulgaria is also characterized by transitional periods between the four seasons of the year.

Thanks to the many mountain forests around the town and the lack of industrial pollution, the air is clean in Blagoevgrad. Winter is mild, brief and marked by little snowfall. The average temperature in January is 0.6 °C. Summers are long and dry, with a small amount of rainfall. The average July and August temperature is 24 °C and the maximum temperature measured in Blagoevgrad is 44.6 °C.

Living conditions:

Financial support:

Volunteers will receive financial support/ food and pocket money/ in accordance with the Erasmus+ Programme Guide, which will be enough to cover all their basic needs, every month from coordinating institution.

Accommodation:

- a) Volunteer will be accommodated in room (in most cases alone or shared with another volunteer) in their own flat with bathroom and kitchen.
- b) Volunteers will share a flat together, they usually have single or double rooms.
- c) Flats are furnished and equipped with pillows, duvet covers, pillow cases and washing machine.
- d) Internet connection /Wi-Fi/ will be provided.

The practical arrangements (working hours, days off, holidays):

- Each volunteer will work from Monday to Friday, around 35 hours per week, that is, no longer than 6 hours a day. Usually from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m
- Volunteers will have 2 days off per month (altogether 12 days throughout the project, which can be taken off monthly or all together for a bigger holiday). In all cases volunteers have to inform their hosting/coordinating organization about their plans.
- All Bulgarian holidays are also free for the volunteer.

Local transport:

Volunteer will not need to use any local transport as our office is located in the city center and their accommodation will be in a 10-15 minutes walking distance. However, if they need to use the local transport, the prices of the taxi fares in Blagoevgrad are very cheap and you can travel from one side of the city to the other for less than 2 euro, rent a bike, or use the public transport which is well arranged.

Language support:

Even though the working language will be English, still each volunteer will have the opportunity to attend a private Bulgarian language course. Language support will be arranged by coordinating institution. Course will be held by professional Bulgarian as a foreign language teacher. Duration of the course depends on the length of the project. As a coordinating

organization, we will provide other opportunities to practice Bulgarian (tandem meetings, etc.). Moreover, our team will assist the learning process of each volunteer.

Mentor:

The coordinating organization provides the volunteer with a mentor's support who will help the volunteer to set learning goals and together they may evaluate them after the project has finished. Also, the mentor can help the volunteer with emergency situations, such as going to the doctor, or orientation and information about the local life and all events happening.

Youth Card:

It is a special edition card dedicated to people who participate in **European Voluntary Service**. It gives an opportunity to travel/ try out new things – all this the cheapest possible way. The card has to be given to all volunteers up to the age of 30, and is valid for one year (or until the last day before the volunteer's 31st birthday).

For more information: ABSociety.info@gmail.com