



Study on the Impact of Transnational Volunteering through the European Voluntary Service

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Study on the Impact of Transnational Volunteering through the European Voluntary Service

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Abstract

The European Voluntary Service (EVS) Impact Study analyses the impact of EVS on individuals, organisations and local communities. It describes how 5 different types of EVS volunteers - 'Standard students', 'Mediterranean students', 'Experienced workers', 'Disadvantaged jobseekers' and 'Western pupils' - benefit differently from EVS.

The study shows measurable impact of EVS on the volunteers' learning and competence development e.g. as regards languages as well as career and work-related aspects: More than 80% of the respondents considered EVS to having been helpful for their professional future. EVS also clearly increases awareness for problems of disadvantaged groups in society. It boosts international attitudes and European values and fosters participants' social capital.

EVS brings clear benefits for participating organisations such as a higher focus on diversity and improved project management.

With a view to the impact of EVS on local communities, the study indicates that EVS generates a ripple effect, motivating others to volunteer, and improves intercultural learning as well as the attitude towards Europe within the local population.

The study also identifies several options to further improve the impact of EVS for individuals and organisations, with a specific focus on the role of young people with fewer opportunities.

Abbreviations

DG EAC	Directorate-General for Education and Culture
EIS	Erasmus Impact Study
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
memo [©]	Monitoring Exchange Mobility Outcomes
PRE / <i>ex ante</i>	Data collected before departure
POST / <i>ex post</i>	Data collected after return

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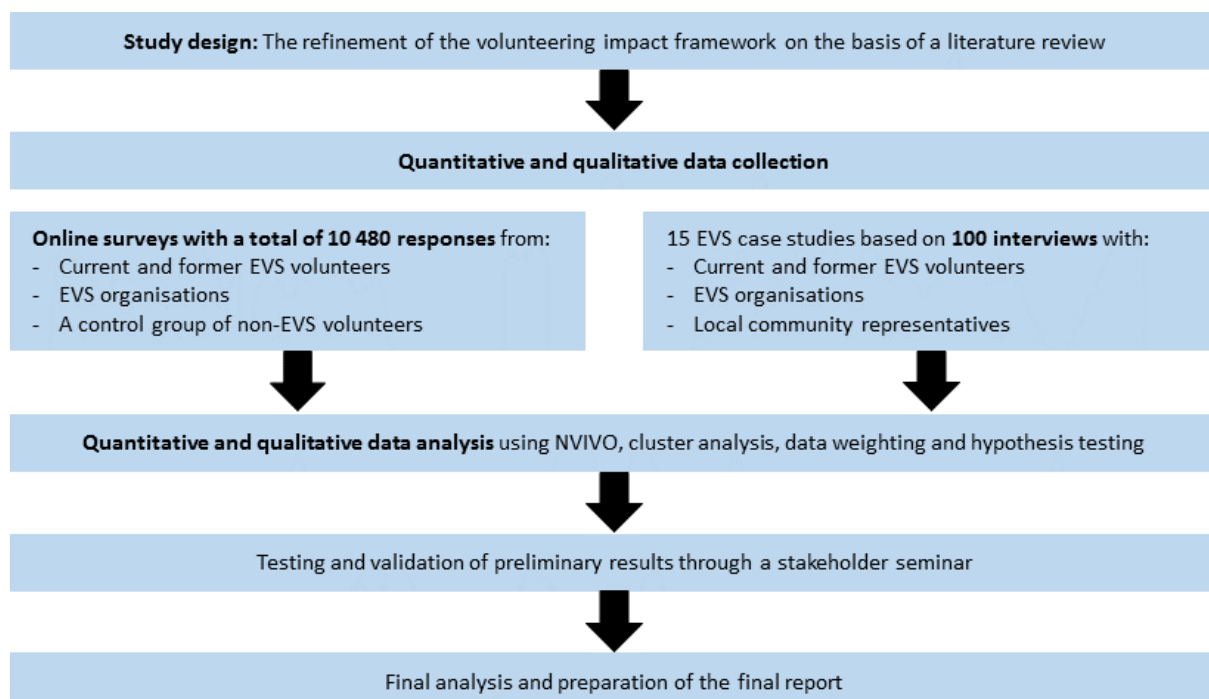
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Why was the study initiated?

In 2014, EVS became part of the Erasmus+ Programme. Within the 2014–2020 Erasmus+ programming period, 100 000 volunteers are expected to be involved, almost double the number of volunteers involved in the period 1996–2013. Currently, nearly 5,200 organisations from 33 programme countries, 22 partner countries and more than 100 other participating countries from around the world are involved in EVS which has become an important element in young Europeans' life and the public sphere.

It analyses among other aspects whether the outcomes are greater for certain target groups of young people participating in EVS, how impact could be increased especially for young people with fewer opportunities, what the challenges of implementing EVS projects are and how these could be overcome to increase the participation of a larger variety and number of organisations, and what the added value of the EVS scheme is in comparison to the volunteering schemes at the national level.

How was the impact study conducted?



Prior to the data collection, an extensive literature review of the impact of volunteering on individual volunteers as well as on organisations and local communities hosting volunteers was conducted, comprising a total of 15 EU monitoring reports and 47 academic articles, research studies, reports and publications.

The study itself covers the entire period 1996–2016. For the quantitative part of the study, the data collection has included all programmes as well as partner countries. For the qualitative part of the study, case studies were conducted in 15 countries. The selection of case studies was made proportionally to ensure a wide range of perspectives, thus representing the scope of the EVS. The results drawn from the quantitative and qualitative analysis were discussed in a stakeholder meeting in Brussels, in order to provide a deeper understanding and their contextualisation.

The study includes three levels of impacts (individuals, organisations, local community) and within each a different set of impact areas.

Level	Impact area
Individual volunteer	Personal and social development
	Learning and competence development
	Improved employability and career prospects
	Increased participation in civic and political life
	Stronger sense of belonging to the EU
	Further mobility
	Increased intercultural learning and dialogue
	Improved social inclusion and solidarity
Organisation	Organisational development
	Internationalisation of the organisation
Local Community	Improved social inclusion of direct beneficiaries
	Community cohesion

The **qualitative data collection** comprised 100 targeted interviews and 15 in-depth case studies. The **quantitative data collection** consisted of online surveys were designed to capture information from EVS volunteers, EVS alumni and EVS organisations, as well as from a control group of non-EVS volunteers. Overall, 10 480 individuals responded to the surveys. This includes responses from 8 600 individuals and almost 1 900 organisational representatives.

In order to analyse the impacts particularly on individuals, special instruments such as psychometric measurements of personality (memo[®]) and cluster analysis to identify types of volunteers were used next to classical analytical methods such as frequencies and distributions. Data weighting was applied to the quantitative data in order to increase their representativeness. This weighting ensured that no group of participants is over - or underrepresented in the sample, thus possibly biasing the results.

Who are these EVS volunteers?

EVS volunteers responding to the survey have some clearly identifiable characteristics:

- The majority are women (63%);
- The parents of the majority of EVS volunteers and alumni are educated to a tertiary degree level;

- Like their parents, the majority of EVS participants have completed/are in the process of completing/are planning to complete tertiary education: 61% of current EVS volunteers hold a tertiary level degree and among the EVS alumni, 74% held a tertiary degree at the time of the survey. Findings suggest that the apparent social selectivity in EVS should be perceived as a selectivity of volunteering as such, rather than a unique characteristic of EVS as a volunteering scheme;
- Substantially more EVS (12%) than non-EVS (2%) volunteers were actively looking for a job. This might indicate that international mobility through EVS is more attractive for young people in a 'precarious' job situation;
- Participants see EVS as an opportunity to a) gain skills and experiences that are attractive to employers and which will differentiate them from their peers; b) explore new and different career possibilities; and c) escape a precarious situation, be it (long-term) unemployment or unsatisfactory work, and identify new outlooks and a sense of direction;
- Significantly more young people with fewer opportunities stated that they engaged in EVS in order to improve and widen their career prospects or because they wanted to enhance their future employability (45% compared to 35% among young people without fewer opportunities);
- The most common sources of motivation for current volunteers were the opportunity to learn a foreign language (87%), meet new people (86%) and the opportunity to live abroad (84%), followed by soft skills development (78%) and benefits for career prospects (63%);
- Most EVS volunteers (70% of both current participants and alumni) had previous volunteering experience before taking part in EVS, and a third had previously been abroad as part of another longer-term scheme, such as Erasmus exchange or a work placement.

Despite the similarities, the study could also identify five "types of EVS volunteers" through cluster analysis who share a number of characteristics: '**Standard students**'¹, '**Mediterranean students**'², '**Experienced workers**'³, '**Disadvantaged jobseekers**'⁴ and '**Western pupils**'⁵.

What characterises EVS organisations?

The majority of participating EVS organisations (76%) belong to the private non-profit sector and most of them have only few employees (64% have less than 10) and most of the EVS organisations host only a small number of volunteers (two thirds have less than 10 volunteers annually).

However, the longer an organisation participates in EVS, the more likely it is that they host a larger number of volunteers per year. They operate predominantly in local languages, with approximately a quarter of the responding organisations stating that

¹ These are students at universities from across the whole of Europe and other regions, excluding Southern Europe, with an average age of nearly 24 years. No young people with fewer opportunities are included in this group.

² The profile of these students is almost the same as for the previous group except that all the 'Mediterranean students' come from Southern Europe and their average age is slightly higher – 24.5 years.

³ These volunteers were already employed full-time before taking part in EVS. They are more or less equally distributed across all countries, although Northern Europe was their most common home region and Southern Europe the rarest. Most are aged 26 or over and only a few young people with fewer opportunities are included in this group.

⁴ These participants are all recruited from among young people with few opportunities, most of whom were actively seeking a job before taking part in EVS. They are spread equally across all regions and have an average age of 24.5 years.

⁵ This group includes upper-secondary pupils mostly from Western Europe, with an average age of 19 years. No young people with fewer opportunities and no participants from partner (non-programme) countries are included in this group.

English is their primary working language. In general, the EVS organisations stated that a substantial proportion of their volunteers are young people with fewer opportunities. Only 17% stated that fewer than 10% of their volunteers came from disadvantaged backgrounds, while in 5% of the organisations over 90% of the volunteers were considered to be young people with fewer opportunities. On average, across the EVS organisations who responded to the survey, 41% of the volunteers recruited were young people with fewer opportunities, which is double the number of volunteers in our sample who self-reported as disadvantaged. Most of the responding organisations also stated that they work in the field of youth information and youth leisure, which reflects the main areas of EVS volunteering activity cited by EVS volunteers and alumni. In addition, the other major areas of volunteering work among current and past EVS volunteers, such as social exclusion, art and culture or European awareness, were strongly represented among the organisations.

The case studies indicate that organisations' motivations to participate in EVS are either because they were founded or influenced by former EVS volunteers, or because they started off as local partners of EVS and over time, with the help of the coordinating EVS organisation, obtained EVS accreditation, or they had a long history or a specialised profile, with an interest to add an international dimension to their activities or to develop new partnerships with countries with which they do not typically cooperate.

How does EVS impact on individuals?

In general, **volunteers perceive EVS to be very beneficial**. Almost all of the current EVS volunteers (96%) and of the alumni (97%) agree that EVS is very profitable for their personal development by e.g. giving them the opportunity to learn about themselves and broaden their horizons. Additionally, 96% of the EVS volunteers after return and 98% of the alumni state also that they gained new insights about themselves and their abilities. EVS also has a strong impact on developing volunteers' autonomy and independence.

EVS attracts participants with an already very high level of personality traits, which effectively limits the change that can be produced through the EVS stay abroad. Although 87% of EVS volunteers feel that EVS had a positive impact on their personality development, such a positive change was not proven by the psychometric analysis. However, most EVS volunteers have already graduated and/or studied abroad, or had other volunteering experience prior to EVS. Therefore, they had the chance to develop their personality before joining EVS and as previous research tells us, the first interventions have the greatest impact, therefore the chance for EVS to have impact on personalities is limited.

On the other hand, EVS has a **measurable impact on the volunteers' learning and competence development**. Three out of four respondents state that EVS helped them to improve their inter-personal and social competences, especially such skills as interpersonal communication or understanding of other cultures, while the impact on technical skills is somewhat reduced. Almost all of the volunteers (96%) and of the alumni (97%) state that they improved their language skills, both in the local language and in English during EVS. While most volunteers start learning the local language from zero, they usually become fluent by the end of their EVS. The impact on improving English language skills is also strong.

EVS also provides **substantial impact on career and work-related aspects**. More than 80% of EVS volunteers and EVS alumni feel that EVS helped them to identify opportunities for their professional future, helped them to clarify what they want to do later in life, and prepare them for an international career path. Almost all EVS organisations (91%) stated that EVS has a high or very high impact on the employability of volunteers. Moreover, 80% of EVS volunteers coming back from the EVS stay reported that they expect to have better job opportunities because of their EVS experience. Just over half of the EVS volunteers (59%) and of the alumni (55%) feel that the EVS

experience helped them to find their first job, and two out of three believe that it was profitable for their career development. Some (42%) of the EVS alumni are holding managerial positions. Significantly higher results also concern Disadvantaged Job Seekers who are more interested in creating their own business/company/organisation or a cultural/youth project, and are more actively participating in social and political life after EVS. Moreover, EVS is related to an entrepreneurial spirit, as 9% of the alumni already started their own company.

EVS additionally fosters participants' social capital. Almost all of the alumni (97%) have friends who live abroad, and 94% still keep in contact with friends they had met during the volunteering period. Most of the EVS volunteers (63%) who returned and 51% of the EVS alumni also have a partner with a different nationality, five times more than among non-mobile volunteers.

EVS boosts international attitudes. It makes people more mobile, as half of the EVS alumni have already changed their living/working country at least once, and every fifth even more than once. EVS stimulates the volunteers' interest in travelling and discovering new places and cultures. EVS volunteers already have a strong relationship to Europe and this remains stable over time (for 50% of alumni). After EVS, two thirds of EVS volunteers are more interested in European topics and 36% feel more European. Participation in EVS also often leads to increasing volunteers' knowledge about, and interest in, other countries and cultures, as well as in different perspectives and ways of thinking. EVS volunteers tend to become more open to other cultures and often overcome cultural differences.

Also through EVS, **most volunteers gain a better understanding of the problems faced by certain groups of people in the society** and become more committed to help them. More than 80% of the EVS volunteers and around 80% of the alumni say that they feel more aware of and committed to inclusion issues related to people with fewer opportunities and in general to work against discrimination.

Among the five profiles identified for EVS volunteers, Standard Students are significantly more represented than other volunteer profiles regarding improved job chances after EVS, commitment towards community, and awareness of inclusion of people with fewer opportunities.

How does EVS Impact on organisations?

The study shows that EVS **brings clear benefits for participating organisations**, as 97% of surveyed organisations consider their participation 'successful'. Organisations particularly value the positive EVS organisational impact on 'openness to cultural diversity' among staff (72%) and 'improved project management competence' (62%), while practically all (96%) think that EVS has strengthened their international profile. Consequently, three out of four organisations (74%) plan to stay involved in EVS.

In general, the **benefits that EVS brings to the participating organisations are wide-ranging, although they tend to be less visible and less tangible than the EVS impact on individual volunteers**. EVS volunteers and project leaders have different but complementing views about the organisational level impact. Current and former volunteers feel that EVS participation has a direct, positive impact on youth workers and other project leaders involved in the EVS projects, usually in terms of skills development and intercultural learning. While these impacts are also mentioned by the representatives of EVS organisations, the latter focus mostly on organisational gains including the capacity-building and internationalisation, which again help the organisation to increase the offer and outreach of its activities and develop their quality.

Volunteers are modest when assessing their impact on the host organisation, as they tend to find it difficult to define. Many think that they have not had a great deal

of impact on the staff or the organisation. There are several reasons for such perceptions. Firstly, volunteers consider that their influence is not high because the organisation has already received many volunteers before them. Secondly, some EVS volunteers carry out their main tasks and activities outside the host organisation, meaning that their impact on the hosting organisation is not as high as on those groups or bodies (e.g. schools) with which they are frequently in contact.

How does EVS impact on the local community?

Overall, the **impact of EVS on the local community is perceived as being less visible and less significant than the impact on individual volunteers and their host organisations**. Local community impact also seems to be more difficult and less frequently assessed than the other two types of impacts, partly due to the, often, informal nature of interactions between the community and volunteers, and partly due to the lack of tools to structure impact at local level.

However, EVS **leads to a ripple effect**: volunteers have a direct impact on the target groups (direct beneficiaries) and local volunteers they engage with, but also on other locals in the wider community. Many EVS projects and activities develop capacity of local communities and strengthen civil society.

In terms of the direct beneficiaries of the voluntary service, the **work of EVS volunteers seems to be particularly important for the hardest-to-reach target groups** (e.g. people at risk of social exclusion, Roma community, NEETs, people with disabilities or learning difficulties). EVS often enables them to experience new activities that would not be available were it not for the EVS volunteers. It can also enable them to learn languages and to become more open to other cultures. For some of them, many EVS volunteers become role models.

In relation to the impact on the wider community, the EVS **can have a positive impact on intercultural learning and dialogue through the volunteers' interaction with local community members** (e.g. cultural events). This again often increases the locals' interest in travelling abroad and the motivation of local young people to engage in transnational mobility actions.

Contact with incoming EVS volunteers also often has a positive influence on local people's attitudes towards the EU, raising awareness about Europe and their identity as Europeans. Moreover, regular interaction with EVS volunteers can also help to reduce prejudices within local communities towards foreign nationals.

EVS projects seem to have a **positive impact on the awareness and level of interest in local communities about volunteering and the EVS in particular**. A greater understanding of the contribution of youth policy to young people's lives is also often detected.

EVS projects have also often shown to have an **impact on local systems and structures by developing the capacity of local communities and, in doing so, helping build civil society**. Through EVS collaboration of accredited organisations with a network of local partners, an area's capacity to provide opportunities to young people can be strengthened, as too can its civil society.

What hinders individuals and organisations to participate in EVS?

Despite the overall positive findings for EVS, the study also unearthed relevant obstacles both for individuals and organisations. For individuals, these are as follows.

- Firstly, a **lack of awareness of the opportunity** which tends to go hand in hand with the general level of engagement in both formal and non-formal education, training and youth sector activities, and socioeconomic background.
- Secondly, there is some evidence of **negative perceptions of a value of volunteering** programmes to the careers of young people, especially among those family and friends who have not been involved in volunteering, often due to a lack of information about the benefits of EVS.
- Thirdly, **preparing an EVS application** can be a new and daunting experience and aspiring EVS volunteers may not have prior experience and thus may struggle to familiarise themselves with the terms and concepts of such a process.
- Fourthly, the **lack of mobility placements** specifically for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds is a significant barrier in terms of uptake of the EVS for young people with fewer opportunities. This is due to lack of sufficient focus of EVS services on young people with fewer opportunities, who typically not only require additional financial support to participate in the EVS, but also additional advice, guidance and mentoring to make full use of the EVS potential.
- Finally, regulatory issues such as **visa issues for third-country nationals** and **financial barriers, in particular for young people with fewer opportunities**, constitute barriers to their participation in EVS.
- Organisations also face some obstacles regarding their EVS participation. Financial and resource considerations are an important barrier for some organisations interested in participating in EVS, be it the availability of funding for sending organisations, the lack of a flat rate system for small organisations allowing for pooling resources to make cost savings, or the shortage of resources/incentives to identify, involve and then support volunteers with fewer opportunities. Additionally, many new organisations are now experiencing more difficulties than before in terms of being accredited and having their EVS project accepted under Erasmus+, not least due to increased competition. Small NGOs also generally perceive the administrative burden of filling out applications and complying with reporting obligations as too onerous, given the project budgets and human resources available.

What are the main recommendations of this impact study for EVS?

The study findings suggest that some improvements could strengthen the impact of EVS.

EVS could be improved for the **volunteers** by

- Raising awareness of the EVS benefits, especially among more vulnerable young people through an appointment of EVS ambassadors (i.e. EVS alumni) tasked with spreading awareness about EVS through word of mouth, social media and talks at schools, universities, youth centres and careers fairs;
- Empowering and training frontline youth workers and those working in formal services, such as the PES, to raise awareness of opportunities and increase young people's confidence to take up international mobility opportunities such as EVS – financial incentives for youth workers to support young people with fewer opportunities have also proven effective;
- Create new and use existing peer-to-peer networks and other structures to raise awareness-- for example, the creation of an EVS alumni network at EU level (similarly to the Erasmus Student Network) and advertising EVS through the Euro-Peers network launched by NAs in Germany and several other Erasmus+ Programme Countries;

- Advertising EVS as a supported mobility programme by investing more in the training of EVS mentors and pre- and post-mobility training for volunteers;
- Introducing quotas for the involvement of young people with fewer opportunities – in other words, specifying that a certain proportion of the volunteers sent and received should fall into the category of ‘young people with fewer opportunities’;
- Using ‘youth-friendly’ tools and channels for raising awareness, such as social media, TV and radio channels favoured by young people (i.e. MTV), testimonials on YouTube, EVS stories on Euronews, EVS ambassadors among celebrities, etc.; and
- Preparing jargon-free guides/information materials on EVS, featuring testimonials from EVS alumni.

EVS could be improved for **organisations** by

- Reinforcing the role of the sending organisations in selecting and ‘matching’ volunteers is important, with a particular focus on reaching out to young people with fewer opportunities, motivating them for mobility, and accompanying them with adequate support throughout the experience (before, during and after the EVS);
- Reconsidering the EVS accreditation process as organisations with many years of experience in preparing EVS project applications have an upper hand, given the expertise acquired and their available administrative resources. At the same time, active volunteers have the potential to make a big organisational impact in small, less organised organisations, meaning that it is important to ensure a wider pool of EVS organisations;
- Strengthening the quality systems in EVS is necessary by raising the capacity of host organisations to offer a quality EVS experience to all volunteers, which would be beneficial both for the volunteers as well as for the hosting staff and the organisation overall. Monitoring the implementation of the projects on the ground in terms of the support provided to the volunteers and the conditions ensured could prove valuable in levelling the standard of EVS projects across the board;
- Improving the capacity and resources of EVS host organisations to ensure consistently high-quality EVS activities, and to provide high-quality pre-departure preparation and follow-up upon return of EVS volunteers. This could include the training of mentors, training on maximising the impact on the local community, and training on supporting volunteers with specific needs. Coordinating organisations and National Agencies are already playing a role in addressing these weaknesses, but their role could be further strengthened and better resourced;
- For EVS sending organisations, concrete proposals for their improvement include training on how to reach specific target groups and how to prepare them for mobility. Some project leaders believe that for smaller or new applicant organisations, it would be beneficial to have targeted training on issues such budget management, reporting, monitoring and volunteer management.
- Supporting follow-up processes after EVS is vital for ensuring the re-integration of the volunteer in the ‘home’ community. A proper follow-up support of the returned volunteer could direct the individual to appropriate services in the home community, such as career guidance. It could also support the volunteer to share his/her experience with others in the community and, in this way, to extend the positive impact also on the home community.

EVs could be improved for **local communities** by

- EVS projects should facilitate direct interaction between EVS volunteers and locals;
- EVS projects should be designed to match the needs of the local community,
- This level of impact would need to become a more recognised and formal priority for EVS projects and the impact on this level should be planned as an integrative part of the project.

1 Introduction

Since its foundation in 1996, the European Voluntary Service (EVS) has allowed 100 000 volunteers to complete voluntary work in communities abroad. By providing opportunities for volunteers to do their service all over Europe and beyond, EVS has contributed to building new friendships, reinforced the work of non-profit organisations and provided young people with unique opportunities to develop their personality and skills.

In 2014, EVS became a member of the broad family of Erasmus+ Programme actions, having been in existence for 20 years already. Within the 2014–2020 Erasmus+ Programming period alone, 100 000 volunteers are expected to participate, almost double the amount from 1996 to 2013. In the 2014-2020 programming period of Erasmus+, nearly 5 200 organisations from 33 Erasmus+ Programme Countries, 22 Partner Countries neighbouring the EU and more than 100 other Partner Countries from around the world are involved in sending, coordinating and receiving volunteers. Currently, EVS comprises 5,200 accredited organisations. EVS is growing and has become an important element for young people to express their solidarity and to experience Europe.

This study provides a detailed evaluation of the impact EVS has on young people and participating organisations as well as local communities involved. A wide range of effects is discussed, from the contribution to young people's employability and career success, to the internationalisation of participating organisations and benefits to society in terms of openness and cultural diversity.

The goal of this study is, on the one hand, to identify and highlight the contribution EVS makes to the various stakeholders involved, and, on the other, to provide useful feedback and contribute to further development of the scheme. A list of policy recommendations in the final chapter of this study suggests ways to make EVS even more effective and efficient in its mission.

This introductory chapter provides three types of information:

- First, it offers background information on EVS especially in relation to its origin, practical operation and institutional arrangements. This is aimed at those readers who are less familiar with the day-to-day operation of the scheme.
- The last two parts offer more detailed information on the objectives of the assignment as well as information on the scope, in terms of key research questions.

1.1 Background to the European Voluntary Service

The European Voluntary Service and its context

Developments over the last 20 years show that youth volunteering and particularly the EVS have been a constant of youth policy for both the European Commission and the EU Member States. Volunteering⁶ of young people has been a key priority of the Open Method of Coordination in the field of youth since the 2001 White Paper for Youth⁷, with voluntary activities being the focus of Council Resolutions in 2002⁸ and 2007⁹. By 2007,

⁶ Defined as 'voluntary engagement in another country that is characterised by the following aspects: open to all young people, undertaken by own free will, fixed period, with clear objectives, structure and framework, unpaid but pocket money and coverage of expenses', according to the Commission Communication of 2004.

⁷ European Commission White Paper on Youth of 21 November 2001 – A new impetus for European youth, COM(2001) 681 final.

⁸ Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, of 14 February 2002 on the added value of voluntary activity for young people in the context of the development of Community action on youth, OJ C 050.

the EVS was experiencing three times more demand from young people than there were volunteering places available¹⁰. The high demand for transnational volunteering places made Member States recognise the importance of cross-border volunteering¹¹ and the value of, and high demand for, EVS. As a result, Member States committed to opening up their national volunteering schemes to youth from other EU countries. Their decision was recorded in the first ever Council Recommendation in the youth policy field, which aimed at improving the interoperability of existing national volunteering schemes and enhancing young volunteers' mobility across the EU¹².

Volunteering is one of the eight fields of action of the **EU Youth Strategy (2010–2018)**. EU youth policy seeks to remove obstacles to voluntary activities, promote and support cross-border mobility of young people, and improve the recognition of the value of volunteering as well as the learning outcomes acquired through this non-formal learning¹³. To facilitate the implementation of these objectives, an expert group was in place between 2009 and 2014 to encourage mutual learning among the Member States in terms of identifying ways and means of cooperation and exchanging good practices in the field of cross-border volunteering of young people. To improve the sharing of information on learning mobility and volunteering opportunities, in 2014 the European Commission developed a Volunteering Portal on the European Youth Portal that includes a database of EVS-accredited organisations¹⁴, comprising 5,200 organisations to date.

The **EU Youth Report 2015**¹⁵ stated that in many Member States the EVS is an important and often the main source for youth volunteering in another country. Member States also reported that the European Year of Volunteering (EYV) 2011 helped raise awareness of youth volunteering by giving visibility to the work of many young volunteers and drawing attention to the value of volunteering for society and the individuals involved.¹⁶ The value of volunteering in promoting intercultural dialogue, social inclusion, non-discrimination and active citizenship was reiterated in the Paris Declaration of Education Ministers of 17 March 2015¹⁷, following the tragic surges of violent extremism at the start of 2015.

Transnational volunteering among young people was given a boost by the recent launch of the **European Solidarity Corps**, which is a new initiative to create opportunities for young people to volunteer or work in projects that benefit communities and people around Europe. It was announced by the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, during his annual State of the Union address on 14 September 2016, and officially launched in December 2016¹⁸. The European Solidarity Corps brings together two complementary strands: a volunteering strand building on EVS as well as other EU funding programmes and a new occupational strand, which provides young

⁹ Resolution of the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council of 16 May 2007 on implementing the common objectives for voluntary activities of young people, OJ C 241.

¹⁰ Evaluation of the EVS 2000–2006 and Eurobarometer survey 2007.

¹¹ Cross-border voluntary activities are defined as 'open to all young people, undertaken by their own free will in the general interest, for a sustained period, within a clear framework and in a country other than the country of residence, unpaid or with token payment and/or coverage of expenses. Voluntary activities should not have an adverse effect on potential or existing paid employment, nor should they be seen as a substitute for it', according to the Council Recommendation of 20 November 2008, OJ C 319.

¹² Council Recommendation of 20 November 2008 on the mobility of young volunteers across the European Union, OJ C 319.

¹³ Council Resolution of 27 November 2009 on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010–2018), OJ C 311.

¹⁴ https://europa.eu/youth/evs_database

¹⁵ EU Youth Report 2015, http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/youth/library/reports/youth-report-2015_en.pdf

¹⁶ Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field: Results of the first cycle of the Open Method of Coordination in the youth field (2010–2012).

¹⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/2015/documents/citizenship-education-declaration_en.pdf

¹⁸ DG EAC (2017), European Solidarity Corps, Frequently asked questions, https://europa.eu/youth/solidarity/faq_en

people with the opportunity of a job or traineeship in a wide range of sectors engaged in solidarity activities and requiring committed, motivated young people¹⁹.

History and development of the EVS

At the initiative of the European Commission, EVS was first introduced as a Pilot Action in 1996–1997 and later adopted as a Community Action Programme in 1998–1999. In 2000, EVS was included in the Youth Programme, thus gaining more visibility; as a result, by its 10th anniversary EVS had reached 30 000 volunteers (1996–2006)²⁰.

Youth in Action (2007–2013) introduced several changes to improve the effectiveness of the EVS scheme: the management was decentralised, with responsibilities delegated to National Agencies (NAs) for Youth in Action, funding rules were simplified, EVS projects were extended to groups of volunteers, and the geographic scope and age range were broadened (from 25 to 30 years of age)²¹. The EVS was one of the main components of the Youth in Action programme. Every year between 2007 and 2013, it facilitated the mobility of around 7 000 young people aged between 18 and 30 in volunteering in a country other than their home country. In the last year of the Youth in Action programme, the number of volunteers going abroad reached a record of 10 000 for 2013²². The programme also included measures to support youth workers and youth organisations to improve the quality of their activities in the field of volunteering. By the end of 2011, approximately 35 000 young people had participated in the EVS under Youth in Action, bringing the total number of volunteers to over 55 000 since the creation of the EVS scheme²³.

Since 2014, EVS has formed part of the Erasmus+ programme (2014–2020) under Key Action 1: 'Learning Mobility of Individuals'. It is detailed under 'Learning Mobility of Young People', which also includes youth exchanges and youth workers' training and networking. EVS was also included as a possible activity under Key Action 2 'Capacity Building in the field of youth'. About 100 000 volunteers are expected to take part in EVS during the seven years of the Erasmus+ Programme. The minimum age requirement of participants in EVS was reduced from 18 to 17 years, while the upper age limit has remained 30.

In addition, a major innovation introduced through the Erasmus+ Key Action 1 is the funding of 'Large-Scale European Voluntary Service (EVS) Events'. This sub-action consists of supporting large-scale volunteering projects (involving at least 30 EVS volunteers) in the framework of European or worldwide events in the field of youth, culture and sport (e.g. World Youth Summits, European Capitals of Culture, European Youth Capitals, European sport championships)²⁴.

Furthermore, importantly, 'Strategic EVS projects' provide opportunities for experienced EVS coordinating organisations to develop EVS projects that generate systemic impact on the local, regional, national and/or European level. Such projects will make strategic use of EVS activities in addressing identified challenges in line with the key priorities.²⁵

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ EACEA (2006), *European Voluntary Service – Fact Sheet*, http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/youth/library/documents/evs/Facts_on_EVS.pdf

²¹ http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/youth/library/documents/evs/Facts_on_EVS.pdf

²² Youth in Action Programme (2007–2013): ec.europa.eu/youth/tools/youth-in-action_en.htm

²³ European Commission (2013), EU Youth programmes 1988–2013: <http://www.juventudenaccion.injuve.es/opencms/export/download/noticias/25ansEUYouth.pdf>

²⁴ European Commission (2015), Erasmus+ Programme Guide: http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/documents/erasmus-plus-programme-guide_en.pdf

²⁵ Ibid.

Moreover, through financing from the Erasmus+ Key Action 3: 'Support for Policy Reform', a transnational volunteering project entitled IVO4ALL²⁶ came into being in 2015, aimed at increasing the inclusivity of cross-border volunteering by including more young people with fewer opportunities.²⁷ The specific objectives of this project are to develop new methods of cross-border volunteering support for young people with fewer opportunities, to try out these methods in practice and to develop them into validated tools and mechanisms.

General EVS system: Projects

The European Voluntary Service enables young people aged 17–30 to carry out voluntary service for a period of between 2 and 12 months – with an additional option of 2 weeks to 2 months for people with fewer opportunities or group volunteering – in a country other than their country of residence. Young volunteers are given the opportunity to contribute to the daily work of an organisation, which often includes contributing to local community projects (i.e. in schools, hospitals, centres for elderly people, etc.). An EVS project can focus on a variety of themes and areas, such as culture, youth, sports, social care, cultural heritage, arts, civil protection, environment, development cooperation.

The vast majority of EVS projects – except those funded through 'Capacity building in the field of youth' and 'Large-Scale European Voluntary Service events', which are funded at the level of the EACEA – are selected at the level of the Erasmus+ National Agencies.

The vast majority of participating organisations involved in a European Voluntary Service activity must hold a valid EVS accreditation²⁸. In principle, any participating organisation established in a programme country²⁹ can submit an application, be it a non-profit (non-governmental) organisation, a European youth NGO, a social enterprise, a public body at local level, or an informal group of young people³⁰. At the centralised level, the EACEA manages the projects submitted for the 'Large-Scale European Voluntary Service events' and 'Capacity building in the field of youth'.

An EVS project should have at least one sending organisation and one hosting organisation, but can also have a coordinating organisation to coordinate the EVS project and bear the financial and administrative responsibility. The roles of each organisation in an EVS project are described in the EVS Charter³¹ – which also presents the main principles and quality standards for an EVS project – and are specified in the project application.

EVS activities can be either individual, with one volunteer sent by one sending organisation to one hosting organisation, or a Group EVS Activity, with more than two

²⁶ The IVO4ALL project is implemented by an international consortium consisting of nine partners from five European countries: France, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg and the United Kingdom. Project partners include ministries (France, Italy and Lithuania) as well as volunteering organisations vital to the implementation of the national volunteering schemes (France, Italy, Luxembourg and United Kingdom), and an international company in charge of the project evaluation. Source: www.ivo4all.eu

²⁷ These are considered to be young people at a disadvantage compared to their peers because they face challenges and issues for example as discrimination, economic difficulties, have disabilities, educational difficulties, or health problems. See Erasmus+ programme guide, http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/sites/erasmusplus/files/files/resources/erasmus-plus-programme-guide_en.pdf

²⁸ However, currently (2017), organisations taking part in large-scale EVS events or organisations from Other Partner Countries of the World involved in Capacity Building projects in the field of youth can participate in EVS activities without accreditation. 2017 Erasmus+ programme Guide http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/sites/erasmusplus/files/files/resources/erasmus-plus-programme-guide_en.pdf and EVS Accreditation Guidelines: <https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-2938/EVS%20Accreditation%20Guidelines.pdf>

²⁹ A volunteer from a programme country must carry out her/his activity in another programme country or in a partner country neighbouring the EU. A volunteer from a partner country neighbouring the EU must carry out her/his activity in a programme country.

³⁰ Informal groups of young people can, however, not apply for 'Capacity building in the field of youth' projects, 'Strategic EVS' projects or 'Large-scale European Voluntary Service events' which, involve all, in general, a substantially higher budget than other EVS projects.

³¹ https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/sites/eacea-site/files/evs-charter-2014_en.pdf

and up to a hundred volunteers sent by one or several sending organisations to one or several hosting organisations. The distinguishing feature of the Group EVS Activity is that volunteers carry out their service in the same period and the tasks they perform are linked to a common topic (i.e. a specific event in the case of large-scale EVS events).

The primary role of the hosting organisation is in coordinating the volunteers' work, referred to as the 'EVS Activity' or EVS Service, which is the core of the EVS project and made up of an unpaid, non-profit-making and full-time voluntary service for the benefit of the local community. The hosting organisation is also responsible for providing the volunteer with accommodation, 'pocket-money', mentorship, ongoing support (personal, task-related, linguistic and administrative), language training, and opportunities to integrate into the local community as well as to meet other EVS volunteers and young people.

The sending organisation is responsible for providing adequate preparation for the volunteer before departure, including administrative support (i.e. help with applying for a visa for non-EU volunteers) and a pre-departure training course. Upon the volunteer's return, the sending organisation arranges for the volunteer's participation in the evaluation of the EVS Activity, gives them the opportunity to exchange and share experiences and get involved in the dissemination and exploitation of results, and provides support to help them re-integrate into their home community. At the end of the EVS project, the volunteer receives a Youthpass³² certificate in recognition of the skills and competences acquired during the volunteering experience.

EVS implementation instruments

The implementation of EVS consists mainly³³ of a well-defined triangle formed by the European Commission, the Executive Agency (EACEA) and National Agencies (NAs) (Erasmus+ since 2014), as shown below.

In addition to managing the budget, the Commission is responsible for setting the objectives and outcome indicators as well as monitoring the general implementation of EVS. The Commission delegates the responsibility for managing the EVS projects at centralised³⁴ European level to EACEA. All the other EVS projects are managed on a decentralised basis through NAs, which are responsible for selecting and funding both EVS projects and participants, and monitoring the EVS at national level (see Figure 1-1).

The coordinating organisations receive the funds and allocate them accordingly. Yet the level of support provided through EVS goes beyond financial support. To ensure that EVS is a true learning service and once-in-a-lifetime experience for personal development, the volunteer is offered training and evaluation³⁵ sessions such as pre-departure and on-arrival training, mid-term evaluation, and evaluation of the activity as such.

Particular emphasis on young people with fewer opportunities

Since the creation of the scheme, EVS has aimed to pay special attention to young people with fewer opportunities. The rationale behind this is that voluntary activities constitute a valuable opportunity for mobility for young people who would otherwise benefit less, or not at all, from mobility programmes such as Erasmus+. Moreover, a

³² <https://www.youthpass.eu/en/youthpass/>

³³ There are also other structures that provide 'complementary expertise': the SALTO Youth-Resource Centres, the EuroDesk Network, the Euro-Med Youth Platform, etc.

³⁴ Projects submitted by youth NGOs active at the European level or by promoters from 'Neighbouring partner countries' or from 'Other partner countries of the world', and projects linked to large-scale European events.

³⁵ EVS Training and Evaluation Cycle Guidelines and minimum quality standards:
http://ec.europa.eu/youth/programme/mobility/documents/evs-training-evaluation-guidelines_en.pdf

voluntary service can often be a second chance for those young people to acquire new skills and competences and thereby improve their employability. For these reasons, young people with fewer opportunities have been encouraged to take part in EVS by putting in place specific incentives: the possibility to go on EVS for a shorter period (from two weeks up to two months) and to receive additional support, i.e. a pre-departure visit (of up to two days) to the hosting organisation.

An 'Erasmus+ Inclusion and Diversity Strategy in the field of youth' has been designed as a common framework to support the participation and inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities. The strategy aims to ensure that the focus on inclusion and diversity is present at all stages of EVS projects: management, including promotion; support for applicants; selection of projects; and evaluation and dissemination of project outcomes³⁶. Moreover, ensuring that opportunities are made available to all young people, regardless of their background, is central to EVS under the Erasmus+ Programme.

1.2 Objectives of the study

The main aim of this study is to evaluate both short- and long-term effects of transnational volunteering through the EVS. The study's major focus is thereby on the impact of this programme at three levels:

- Individual participants
- organisational (organisations involved in sending / receiving EVS volunteers / coordinating projects),
- Local community ('hosting' communities).

The other key research questions of the assignment are as follows:

- Are the outcomes greater for certain target groups of young people participating in EVS?
- How can the impact be increased, in particular for: 1) Young people with fewer opportunities taking part in EVS as volunteers; 2) Sending EVS organisations and organisations that focus on inclusion projects; and 3) The local community in which the volunteer is immersed during EVS.
- What are the challenges of implementing EVS projects and how could these be overcome to increase participation of a larger variety and number of organisations?
- What is the added value of the EVS scheme in comparison to volunteering schemes at national level?

Table 1-1 gives an overview of the main zones of impact that have been considered as part of this assignment, as identified based on the terms of reference.

Table 0-1 Characteristics and impact zones

Characteristics	'Impact zones'		
	Individual	Organisational	Local community
Target group(s)	Former participants in EVS Special target group within this	Organisations that took and take part in EVS by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sending • hosting 	Local communities influenced by EVS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a volunteer's hosting community • the home community

³⁶ <https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-3103/InclusionAndDiversityStrategy.pdf>

Characteristics	'Impact zones'		
	Individual	Organisational	Local community
	group: people with fewer opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> coordinating 	of a volunteer (where he/she is from and returns to after the EVS service)
Types of impact of EVS participation	On the development of skills and competences On values and attitudes On career paths, life choices, and European awareness	On involvement in transnational activities On partnerships with other organisations across borders On the involvement of other nationalities in the activities of the organisation On the benefits of taking part in transnational inclusion projects On the overall professional development of the organisation (before and after participation) On skills development of project leaders	On the openness to other cultures and backgrounds Any type of impact or effect differentiated by whether the community hosts a volunteer or is his/her home community
Aspects not or less related to impact		Tendency to continue (or not) in EVS Factors motivating organisations to continue in EVS Factors demotivating organisations to continue in EVS Challenges experienced by organisations in getting involved (and probably staying involved) in EVS Improving understanding of optimised implementation of EVS to increase the number and variety of organisations involved in EVS Special task: inclusion of more sending and hosting organisations willing to take people with fewer opportunities (as defined above)	Defining 'local community' properly in the study proposal encompassing various EVS types

Additionally, the study has also investigated the transversal effects of EVS, as illustrated in Table 1-2 below.

Table 0-2 Types of transversal effects / impact of EVS

'Impact zones'		
Individual	Organisational	Local community
On European integration at all	On other volunteering schemes	As a driver for cohesive

three levels mentioned above (individual, organisational, local community level)	(national and/or transnational) On social inclusion and diversity	communities On combating social exclusion Acceptance of cultural diversity
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Apart from these specific interests, the study provides suggestions for the improvement of the scheme in the future, based on evidence gathered through four main channels (these are further described in Chapter 2):

- five online surveys of EVS participants, attracting responses from a total of 10 480 participants;
- case studies in 15 countries describing in detail the impact of EVS on individual volunteers, organisations and host communities, based on interviews with 100 stakeholders;
- a stakeholder seminar to discuss and validate the preliminary findings with an audience of youth organisations, NAs, beneficiaries and other stakeholders; and
- a literature review of empirical evidence on the impact of volunteering.

1.3 Scope of the study

The study covers the entire period 1996–2016. For the quantitative part of the study, the data collection has included all programme countries as well as partner countries; more details about the actual profile of the sample are presented in Chapter 2. For the qualitative part of the study, case studies were conducted in 15 countries. The selection of case studies was made proportionally to ensure a wide range of perspectives. To the extent that qualitative research can be expected to be representative, the study thus represents the scope of the EVS.

1.4 Structure of the report

The report is made up of 5 chapters:

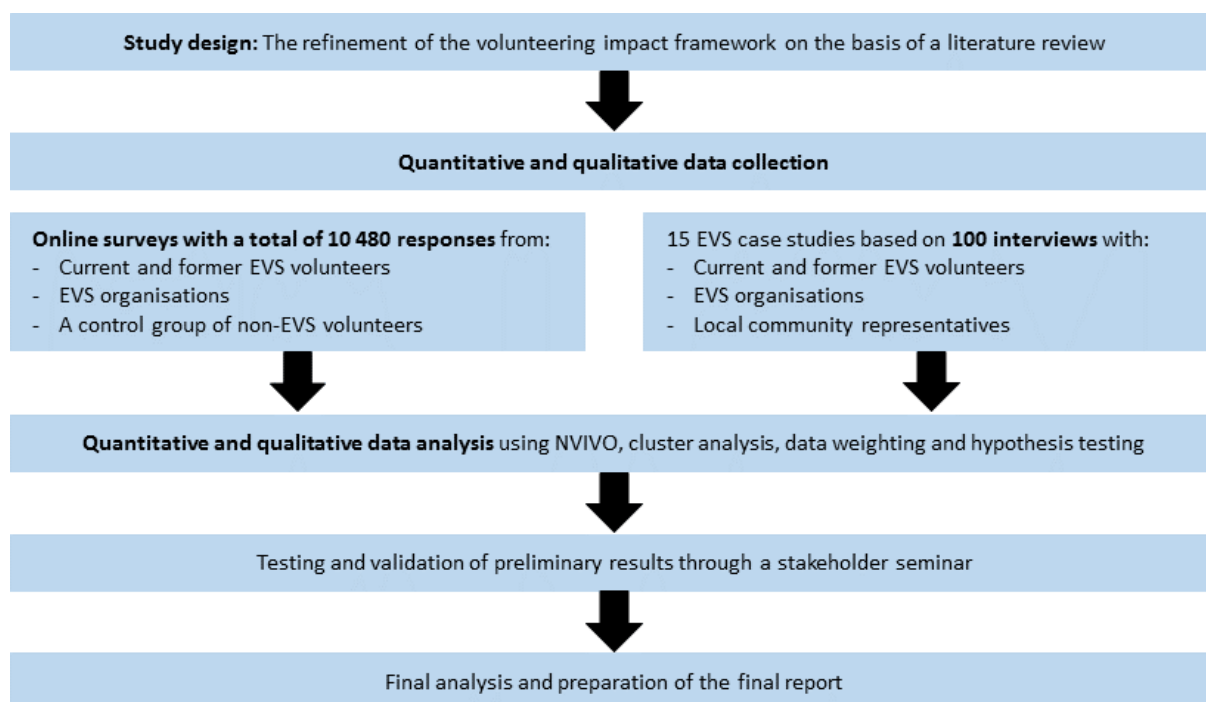
- Chapter 1 – Introduction: This introduction has provided information on the research questions, the scope of the assignment and background information on EVS in terms of its origin, development and practical & institutional context.
- Chapter 2 - Methodology: This chapter offers a description of the methodology, also including information on the study sample (online survey and case study participants).
- Chapter 3 - Profile of EVS participants: This chapter presents the characteristics of participants to the EVS scheme, including the profile of individual volunteers (both current volunteers and alumni) and participating organisations. The profile of individual EVS volunteers is compared against a control group of non-EVS volunteers. This chapter also offers information on the obstacles individual volunteers and organisations face in accessing the scheme.
- Chapter 4 - Impacts: This chapter presents the main results of the assignment related to the impact of EVS on individuals (8 impact areas considered), organisations and local communities.
- Chapter 5 - Conclusions and recommendations: This chapter summarises the main messages of the assignment and recommendation for the future.

Annex 1 – The annex presents the 15 case studies prepared as part of the assignment, describing in very practical terms the impacts of EVS on individual volunteers, organisations and host communities.

2 Methodology

This part of the report presents the methodology for this research assignment. A summary of the steps taken to carry out this assignment is included below, and the steps are explained in more detail in the following sub-sections.

Figure 2-1 An overview of the study method



2.1 Study design

The original study methodology was presented in a joint proposal by CHE and ICF. This approach was further refined during the first weeks of the assignment following an in-depth review of relevant literature.

2.1.1 Literature review

A literature review of the impact of volunteering on individual volunteers as well as on organisations and local communities hosting volunteers was the first task of this assignment. The review included the following.

- A review of EU monitoring reports and statistical data sources describing the general situation of young people in Europe.
- A mapping of existing literature on the impact of volunteering among young people. This included the impact of transnational volunteering and volunteering within one's home country. A long list of literature was screened and the articles and studies with relevant outcome or impact data supported by empirical research evidence were prioritised for an in-depth review.
- A summary of key findings from each article was captured in a table³⁷ and the main findings related to the four research questions listed in Box 2-1 below were described in a dedicated report.

³⁷ Including information on the research design, methods used and sample sizes.

A total of 15 EU monitoring reports and 47 academic articles, research studies, reports and publications were reviewed. The findings from the literature review have been integrated in this main report.

Box 2-1 Research questions of the literature review

1. Who participates in transnational volunteering?
2. Which groups of young people benefit the most from volunteering experiences and in particular from transnational voluntary service?
3. What impact does volunteering have on:
 - individual volunteers?
 - organisations hosting volunteers?
 - the local community?
4. What is the general situation of young people in Europe? Can this be used as a baseline to compare the situation of young people involved in transnational volunteering?

2.1.2 Refinement of the volunteering impact framework

The findings from the literature review were used to complement and refine the initial list of outcome and impact indicators presented in the proposal. Based on the findings, an overview of impacts was compiled separately for volunteering within the home country and for volunteering abroad. This overview was then developed into an impact indicator framework, based entirely on empirical evidence identified from literature.

The refined framework of indicators describes the potential impacts of transnational volunteering by the level of impact (individual, organisational and local community). As shown in Table 2-1 below, the framework comprises eight areas of impact at individual volunteer level (coded A–H), two main fields of impact at organisational level, and two other areas of impact at local community level. For each impact area, the framework provides a set of indicators.

Table 2-1 Framework of indicators of impact of transnational volunteering

Level	Code	Impact area	Impact indicators
IMPACT ON THE INDIVIDUAL VOLUNTEER	A	Personal and social development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in self-confidence and self-esteem • Broadening horizons • Increase in autonomy and independence • Learning about oneself (self-discovery) • Making new friends and communicating with people from other countries • Increase in cultural capital
	B	Learning and competence development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in key competences (communication in foreign languages, learning to learn, social and civic competences, cultural awareness and expression, sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, digital competence, mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology, communication in the mother tongue) • Acquiring new life and practical skills (i.e. how to plan finances)

Level	Code	Impact area	Impact indicators
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in awareness of value and methods related to non-formal learning • Desire to engage in further education/training • Intention to learn foreign languages
	C	Improved employability and career prospects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gaining professional skills and attitudes, and thereby gaining a better understanding of and match with employers' demands • Improved employability (increased chances of finding a job, contacts for employment, etc.) • Obtaining a job by using EVS experience • Clearer idea about career aspirations and goals
	D	Increased participation in civic and political life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in participation in voluntary activities • Increase in voter participation • Increased participation in civic/political life • Increase in participation in similar youth projects
	E	Stronger sense of belonging to the EU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More aware of (common) European values • Higher interest in European topics • Improved image of the EU • Feeling more European than before
	F	Further mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved readiness to work/study/live abroad • Plans to move abroad for work/study/to live • Higher confidence to travel in other countries
	G	Increased intercultural learning and dialogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in intercultural skills (communicating with people from different countries/cultures) • Better understanding of other cultures • More receptivity towards multiculturalism • More tolerance and respect for other cultures • Improved intercultural dialogue
	H	Improved social inclusion and solidarity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of positive values, such as tolerance and solidarity • Increase in social awareness • Greater awareness of global issues • Increased commitment to support the inclusion of the disadvantaged in society • Increased commitment to work against discrimination and racism

Level	Code	Impact area	Impact indicators
ORGANISATION		Organisational development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased resources for NGOs and other organisations (such as local authorities) working with young people and the disadvantaged, including human and expert resources Competence development of youth workers and others working with young people (including project management, coordination and fundraising skills) Gaining new ideas, tools and methods for youth work and non-formal learning Promotion of cultural diversity within NGOs and among youth workers Increase in tolerance and openness of staff More international projects on inclusion of youth with fewer opportunities Increased participation of young volunteers in the work of NGOs and other organisations working with young people Enhanced image and reputation
		Internationalisation of the organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gaining more and new international contacts and partnerships, including opportunities to take part in European and other international projects (such as EVS) Transfer of know-how and good practice Increased attention to an international dimension of youth work
LOCAL COMMUNITY		Improved social inclusion of direct beneficiaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased awareness about volunteering Increased tolerance and openness towards people from other cultures and countries Fostering intercultural learning and dialogue Fostering learning mobility of other young people Making services available to end-users (i.e. learning new languages) that would otherwise not be available
		Community cohesion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased awareness of volunteering and EVS Increased awareness of the concerns and interests of young people in society Enriching the cultural diversity of hosting communities Increasing the interest of the local community in multilingualism and multiculturalism Overcoming stereotypes and prejudices Fostering intercultural learning and dialogue Stronger civil society

Source: Authors; Literature review.

This impact indicator framework was used to design the tools for data collection, including the surveys and the topic guides for the case study interviews. Furthermore, the results were analysed and presented in this report according to the impact areas of the refined framework.

2.2 Data collection

2.2.1 Quantitative data collection

The quantitative data collection aimed to gather quantitative data on the impact of EVS at individual and organisational levels. Online surveys were designed to capture information from EVS volunteers, EVS alumni and EVS organisations, as well as from a control group of non-EVS volunteers. For this purpose, five individual and two organisational target groups were identified and five surveys were prepared, tailored to the needs and objectives of each target group: 1) EVS PRE (pre-departure group of EVS volunteers), 2) EVS POST (post-return group of EVS volunteers), 3) EVS alumni, 4) EVS organisations and 5) non-EVS volunteers.

Table 2-2 Target groups for the online surveys

Level	Target groups
Individual	EVS volunteers (surveying a cohort of volunteers before they start and very early into their EVS stay and a cohort that have just finished their EVS or who are at the very end of their stay)
	EVS volunteers with fewer opportunities (surveying a cohort of volunteers before they start and very early into their EVS stay and a cohort that have just finished their EVS or who are at the very end of their stay)
	Non-EVS volunteers (with no volunteering experience abroad)
	EVS alumni (volunteers who finished their EVS in 2015 or earlier)
	EVS alumni with fewer opportunities (volunteers who finished their EVS in 2015 or earlier)
Organisational	EVS organisations (currently accredited)
	Former EVS organisations

In order to ensure the coherence of the surveys with the objectives of the study and in order to cover all the expected impact areas, we created a matrix linking the expected types of impact for different target groups with survey questions (topics). We differentiated between survey questions already used in the previous studies (Erasmus Impact Study, etc.) and which can therefore provide comparable data, and new survey questions that had to be formulated in order to cover the new impact areas included in the study proposal and other aspects identified by the literature review.

The survey questionnaire for each target group contained different variables and filter questions in order to allow for impact analysis broken down into different categories, e.g. pre-departure to post-return analysis, analysis by gender or academic family background, regional analysis, analysis of participants with fewer opportunities, etc.

The data collection for all target groups was realised using one single landing page: www.volunteering-survey.org. The webpage was designed as a crossroad to differentiate the target groups and direct them to their specific survey.

In order to identify volunteers with fewer opportunities, we used filters in the surveys as this increased the accuracy of the results as well as supporting the need for general mapping and identifying the characteristics of EVS volunteers.

Both current and former EVS organisations were directed to one survey. We used filters to further identify the year(s) of participation, as well as their status in terms of sending and/or hosting EVS volunteers.

The dissemination of the questionnaires was ensured through two different ways. Direct invitations were sent to EVS individuals and EVS organisations, which was enabled by the

European Commission that provided the consortium with a database of EVS participants. Multipliers, National Agencies and EVS organisations were asked to invite to the survey EVS alumni and EVS organisations. Non-EVS volunteers were invited through non-EVS organisations that either had volunteers themselves or coordinated, mediated or supported volunteering activities in their country, region or city. At least one organisation from every programme country was included, plus Switzerland. In particular, large NGOs such as the Scouts, the Red Cross, Caritas, Greenpeace and similar organisations were contacted. Table 2-3 displays the number of actors contacted. The response rate could not be calculated due to the involvement of third parties in the dissemination process, which does not allow the calculation of the total number of participants invited to the survey.

Finally, information about the survey was shared on social media such as Twitter and Facebook³⁸.

From the date of launching the surveys, the number of respondents was monitored regularly and reminders were implemented.

The recruitment of non-EVS volunteers proved difficult mainly because of the lack of interest of this group as well as the respective organisations in participating in an EVS evaluation. However, due to the intensive efforts of the team, it was possible to include a small but sufficient set of non-EVS volunteers.

Table 2-3 The channels for survey dissemination

Target groups	Number
EVS individuals (incl. 8493 EVS alumni)	28 403
EVS organisations	18 552
Non-EVS organisations	365
Multipliers (e.g. SALTO-Youth, EYCA, ERYICA, European Youth Forum, the Alliance)	13
National Agencies	77

2.2.2 Qualitative data collection

The purpose of the qualitative data collection was to confirm and deepen the findings from the quantitative research and to cover any gaps. To this end, three main target groups were identified, from whom data was collected through targeted interviews and in-depth case studies.

Table 2-4 Target groups for interviews of case studies

Target groups	Selection of interviewees
Individual participants in EVS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current EVS volunteers, with a specific emphasis on those volunteers with fewer opportunities EVS alumni (volunteers who have previously done EVS), with a specific emphasis on those alumni with fewer opportunities

³⁸ The following are the main Facebook pages and Twitter accounts used: <https://twitter.com/GreenpeaceEU>; <https://twitter.com/eurodiaconia>; <https://twitter.com/euroscoutinfo>; <https://twitter.com/ymca>; <https://twitter.com/Greenpeace>; <https://www.facebook.com/educentrum2011/>; <https://www.facebook.com/ActiveVolunteersInEurope/>; <https://www.facebook.com/gdnvoluntary/>; <https://www.facebook.com/guides.scouts.europe/>; <https://twitter.com/EuropeanYouthEU>; <https://twitter.com/NCVOvolunteers>; <https://twitter.com/VolunteersWeek>; https://twitter.com/volunteering_uk; <https://twitter.com/volunteering>; <https://twitter.com/voluntireland>; <https://twitter.com/VolScotland>; <https://twitter.com/doituk>; <https://twitter.com/GdnVoluntary>

Organisations involved in EVS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members of staff from the receiving organisation, such as the volunteer coordinator and the project leader Members of staff from the sending organisation (the EVS project promoter)
Local community members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members of the local hosting community in direct contact with EVS volunteers (currently or in the last 1–2 years)

The steps taken to carry out the qualitative data collection are explained below.

Step 1: Selection of case study countries

The original plan was to conduct 10 case studies with fieldwork in 6 countries. It was agreed to increase the number of case studies to 15 by conducting face-to-face interviews in 7 countries and telephone interviews in further 8 countries in order to capture the diversity of EVS experiences. The case studies were conducted in two 'waves' so as to be able to cover potential gaps identified in the survey results.

- The first wave of case studies (7) was conducted during summer (August–September 2016) through on-site visits and face-to-face interviews.
- The second wave of case studies (8) was prepared through telephone interviews in winter 2016–2017 to cover any information gaps and to follow up suggestions from the Stakeholder Seminar that took place in November 2016 (see Chapter 2.5 for further information).

The selection of the first wave of case study countries (Germany, Italy, France, Poland, Portugal, Turkey, United Kingdom) was made on the basis of their high involvement in the EVS scheme. According to the Erasmus+ annual reports for 2014 and 2015, these are the countries with the highest number of EVS-granted projects as well as the highest number of participants in EVS. Furthermore, these countries also had a consistent high level of involvement in the previous programming period (2007–2013). The second wave of case studies (Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Netherlands, Romania, Serbia, Spain, Ukraine) were more focussed on grassroots-level EVS organisations who got involved in the EVS more recently and organisations who involve volunteers from non-EU countries and rural areas.

Therefore, the overall mix of the case study countries reflects the diversity of socio-economic situation, the youth sector and volunteering in Europe in terms of:

- **EU membership in 1996:** 8 'old' Member States (DE, ES, FR, IT, NL, PT, FI, UK), 4 'new' Member States (EE, HU, PL, RO) and 3 non-EU countries (RS, TR, UA);
- **Volunteering tradition:** 7 countries with a strong tradition of voluntary service (DE, EE, FR, IT, NL, FI, UK);
- **Participation of youth in volunteering activities in 2015:** 6 countries with medium-high levels of participation (EE, ES, FR, IT, PL, PT) and 3 countries with high or very high levels of volunteering (DE, NL, UK);
- **Youth unemployment rates in 2014:** Very high (ES, IT, PT), medium-high (EE, FI, FR, HU, PL, RO, TR, UK), low (DE, NL);
- **GDP per capita in 2014** as a socio-economic indicator: 5 countries above 100 (DE, FR, NL, FI, UK, FI) and 9 countries under 100 (EE, ES, IT, HU, PL, PT, RO, RS, TR).

The diversity of countries covered through the 15 case studies is illustrated in the table below.

Table 2-5 Case study countries

#	Country	EU MS in 1996	National volunteering tradition in 2010 ³⁹	2015 youth participation in voluntary activities ⁴⁰	Youth (15–24) unemployment rate in 2014 ⁴¹	Countries' volume indices of GDP per capita in 2014 ⁴²
The first wave of case studies (carried out through on-site visits and face-to-face interviews)						
1	IT	Y	Very high	Medium-high (25)	42.7	97
2	DE	Y	High	High (32)	7.7	124
3	FR	Y	Medium high	Medium high (23)	24.2	107
4	PL	N	Relatively low	Medium high (20)	23.9	68
5	PT	Y	Relatively low	Medium high (27)	34.7	78
6	TR	n/a	n/a	n/a	18.0	53
7	UK	Y	Very high	High (31)	16.9	108
The second wave of case studies, carried out through telephone interviews						
8	EE	N	Medium high	Medium high (25)	15.0	73
9	ES	Y	Relatively low	Medium high (22)	53.2	93
10	FI	Y	High	Relatively low (19)	20.5	110
11	HU	N	n/a	Relatively low (18)	20.4	68
12	NL	Y	Very high	High (38)	12.7	130
13	RO	N	Relatively low	Relatively low (17)	24.0	54
14	RS (Serbia)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	35
15	UA (Ukraine)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

³⁹ According to a 2010 classification provided on page 7 of the 2010 GHK *Study on Volunteering in the European Union*, based on national studies on volunteering. This classification is based on the percentage of adults involved in carrying out voluntary activities. The classification included: (1) Very high: over 40% of adults in these countries are involved in carrying out voluntary activities; (2) High: 30%–39% of adults are involved in volunteering; (3) Medium-high: 20%–29% of adults are engaged in voluntary activities; (4) Relatively low: 10%–19% of adults carry out voluntary activities; (5) Low: less than 10% of adults are involved in voluntary activities. This classification included the following caveat: “National studies use different methodologies, target groups, forms of volunteering (informal vs formal), sample sizes, etc. For example, the Italian figures only include the number of volunteers in specific voluntary organisations and the Greek figures are based on estimates on the number of regular volunteers in the formal sphere in the absence of national surveys on volunteering. Therefore, these findings should be seen as indicative only.”

⁴⁰ Percentage of self-reported involvement by young people aged 15–30 in organised voluntary activities in the last 12 months. Source: [Eurobarometer surveys](#).

⁴¹ Percentage of the unemployed in the age group 15 to 24 years compared to the total labour force (both employed and unemployed) in that age group. Source: [Eurostat](#).

⁴² [Countries' volume indices of GDP per capita](#), 2011–2014.

Step 2: Sampling of EVS organisations

One EVS organisation per country was selected for an on-site visit or to be the central point for the telephone interviews. The selection of EVS organisations was made on the basis of suggestions received from the National Agencies. During the first wave of case studies, each NA provided a list of three to five EVS organisations that matched the following criteria:

- organisations that have been active in EVS for a long period of time, preferably since the country started to implement the EVS scheme;
- organisations that have a history of hosting EVS volunteers with fewer opportunities and/or focus their work on the inclusion of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds; and
- organisations that were currently hosting / sending EVS volunteers over summer 2016.

In view of the lessons learned from the first wave of case studies and the feedback from the Stakeholder Seminar (see Chapter 2.5), the National Agencies contacted for the second wave of case studies were asked to prioritise the following:

- organisations that have received an EVS accreditation recently (this criterion was selected so as to be able to better assess the organisational impact of the EVS as such organisations are more likely to remember this than those who have been involved much longer);
- small, grassroots organisations with limited international contacts and experience (the hypothesis is that small organisations can benefit more from EVS than large associations that already have broad international experience); and
- organisations that host EVS volunteers from non-EU countries and from rural areas (as preliminary findings show that the impact of EVS on volunteers from these backgrounds can be particularly significant).

Based on the suggestions received, the core team then checked the profile of each organisation in the database of EVS-accredited organisations to obtain further details about their involvement with EVS. This allowed for the drawing up of the long list of suggested organisations by order of priority. The prioritisation was performed based on several criteria:

- experience with EVS (short-term v. long-term);
- involvement in EVS (number of EVS volunteers sent, hosted and/or coordinated);
- specific focus of EVS projects on inclusion of vulnerable youth;
- type of EVS projects (topics covered, type of tasks, beneficiaries of activities);
- involvement in other (transnational) volunteering programmes – to allow for comparisons and to assess the EU added value; and
- location (rural area, urban area, capital city, etc.) – to ensure diversity.

Ensuring a mix of different perspectives on EVS was a priority. To this end, a specific emphasis was placed on including sending organisations in the selection, in addition to hosting and coordinating organisations, so as to also capture information about the recruitment of volunteers into EVS, in particular from among young people with fewer opportunities.

The shortlisted EVS organisations for each case study were contacted in order of the priority assigned to them. This final selection of the 15 organisations captures the diversity of experiences with EVS, as shown by Table 2-6 below.

Table 2-6 Profile of the selected EVS organisations

Characteristics		Selected EVS organisations
Type of organisation	NGO	Germany, France, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Spain, Ukraine, Turkey, United Kingdom
	Local authority	Estonia, Finland
Role in EVS	Organisations predominantly send volunteers through EVS	France, Hungary, Poland, Serbia
	Organisations predominantly host EVS volunteers	Estonia, Finland, Italy, Netherlands, Romania, Turkey, Ukraine
	Organisations predominantly coordinate EVS volunteers hosted by other local partner organisations	Germany, Portugal, Spain, United Kingdom
Size of organisation	Small organisations with up to 10 staff	Estonia, Finland, France, Hungary, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Spain
	Medium-sized organisation with 11-30 staff	Germany, Ukraine
	Large organisations with 30+ staff	Finland, Italy, Turkey, United Kingdom
Experience with EVS projects	Organisations that joined EVS in 1996–1997 (DE, IT, UK)	Germany, Italy, United Kingdom
	Organisations that have been sending/hosting EVS volunteers since 2000	France, Hungary, Netherlands, Poland, Serbia
	Organisations that have been sending/hosting EVS volunteers since 2007	Estonia, Finland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Ukraine, Turkey
Locations with different socioeconomic characteristics	Organisations in capital cities	Germany, Poland, Serbia
	Organisations in other large cities with multicultural communities	Netherlands, Spain, Turkey, Ukraine
	Organisations in smaller towns	Finland, France, Italy, Portugal, Romania
	Organisations in rural area	Estonia, Hungary, United Kingdom
Work with different groups of disadvantaged young people⁴³	Organisations working (mostly) with unemployed youth / NEETs	Germany, Finland, France, Poland, Portugal, Turkey
	Organisations working (mostly) with youth from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds	Germany, Estonia, Finland, France, Hungary, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Serbia, Ukraine, Ukraine
	Organisations working (mostly) with young people with disabilities or learning difficulties	Italy, Poland, Romania, Ukraine, United Kingdom

⁴³ Organisations may have indicated more than one priority group.

	Organisations working (mostly) with young people who are refugees or asylum-seekers or have a migrant background	Germany, France, Turkey
	Organisations working (mostly) with young people from rural and isolated areas	Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania, United Kingdom
	Organisations working (mostly) with young people from the Roma community	Hungary, Portugal, Romania
Frequency of sending, hosting or coordinating volunteers with fewer opportunities	Regular experience	Estonia, Finland, France, Hungary, Italy, Romania, Ukraine, United Kingdom
	Occasional experience	Germany, Spain, Poland, Portugal, Serbia, Turkey
	No experience yet	Estonia

The final 15 organisations selected for the case studies are presented in Table 2-7 below.

Table 2-7 An overview of EVS organisations selected for case study research

Country	EVS organisation suggested	Relevance
DE	<u>Internationale Jugendgemeinschaftsdienste Landesverein</u> Berlin e.V.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Non-profit organisation founded in 1947: organises international work camps in Germany and also abroad in cooperation with partner organisations - Accredited by EVS since 1997: vast experience in EVS as well as in other cross-border voluntary service programmes, such as work camps and Voluntary Social Year - Focus of projects on EU citizenship, youth participation and intercultural learning - Located in Berlin
EE	<u>Kohila Open Youth Centre</u> (of the Kohila municipality)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A youth centre run by the municipality, with four members of staff and two volunteers - Implementing EVS projects since 2007 with the purpose of helping and stimulating local children and young people. - Located in Rapla County in northern Estonia, with a population of 3 505.
ES	<u>Euroacción</u> Murcia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Euroacción works mainly with young offenders but also other disadvantaged youth. - Implementing EVS projects since 2011: currently accredited to receive and send volunteers and coordinate EVS projects. - Located in the city of Murcia in the southeast of Spain.
FI	<u>Youth Services</u> at the City of Lahti (Lahden kaupungin nuorisopalvelut)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The City of Lahti employs around 80-90 staff in the youth service department. The department has 20-40 volunteers regularly supporting the various activities, including youth clubs and workshops.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implementing EVS projects since 2007 as a receiving, sending and coordinating EVS organisation: regularly hosts and sends young volunteers with fewer opportunities - Located around 100km from the capital Helsinki; a city with 120 000 inhabitants
FR	<u>ADICE</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Youth organisation founded in 1999: focuses on education through sport and outdoor activities, EU citizenship, EU awareness and democracy - Accredited for sending, receiving and coordinating EVS volunteers; since 2000 it has realised more than 350 voluntary projects and hosted over 80 EVS volunteers - Youth work emphasis on fight against discrimination and social inclusion of disadvantaged youth (the unemployed, unqualified or low qualified, immigrants, etc.) - Located in Roubaix (close to Lille), an area that has a high proportion of socially and economically disadvantaged people, in particular immigrants
HU	<u>Fekete Sereg</u> Youth Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Small youth organisation with 4 full-time staff working around social inclusion through youth work, arts and culture - Implementing EVS projects since 2005; now accredited to send and receive volunteers and coordinating projects. Works mostly with beneficiaries and volunteers with fewer opportunities including local youth from the Roma community - Located in a small village with a total population of 1 666, about 144 km west of Budapest
IT	<u>A.N.F.F.A.S.</u> Onlus di Pordenone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NGO founded in 1994, focusing on health and well-being and youth work with children and youth with disabilities and their families - Active in EVS since the Pilot Action in 1996: so far it has hosted 121 EVS volunteers and sent 102 volunteers abroad, giving priority to those facing social exclusion and disability - 5 volunteers hosted at the organisation during the EVS Pilot Action in 1996 decided to stay on and work at Pordenone after their EVS: they obtained a professional qualification and now work in the social sector - Located in Pordenone, in northern Italy (nearly Venice/Trieste)
NL	<u>Lava Legato</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A small organisation based purely on local and international volunteer input to support children from deprived backgrounds, victims of abuse and people with disabilities. - Implementing EVS projects since 2001: currently receiving, sending and coordinating EVS volunteers. - The recurrent themes of EVS projects organised by the organisation: social entrepreneurship, social inclusion, local cohesion and networking - Located in Rotterdam, the second largest city with a population of over 600 000

PL	<u>Polska Fundacja im. Roberta Schumana</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NGO involved in EVS since 2000 - Annually sends about 20 EVS volunteers and receives 2–4 volunteers; as a coordinating organisation, it also supports 12 volunteers from 5 different host organisations - Works with partner countries in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus - Some experience in hosting EVS volunteers with fewer opportunities, in particular those with educational difficulties, social obstacles or cultural differences - Located in Warsaw
PT	<u>ECOS</u> (Cooperativa de Educação, Cooperação e Desenvolvimento)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cooperative of educators and social entrepreneurs, whose main focus is on social inclusion of young people through youth work and non-formal learning - Actively involved in EVS since 2012: hosts about 10 EVS (long-term) volunteers each year - Located in Faro, an area with a loose web of youth NGOs
RO	<u>Team for Youth association</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Team for Youth association works (primarily) with young people in rural areas, children from the Roma community and young people with disabilities. The organisation has 3 full-time staff and 53 local volunteers - Implementing EVS projects since June 2010 - Frequently hosts volunteers with physical disabilities, early school leavers and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds - Located in Baia Mare, is a small city in the North-Western region of Romania with a population of 124 000
RS	<u>Young Researchers of Serbia</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The organisation works with young people aged 15-30 years old as well as with national youth organisations. - Implementing EVS projects since: 2002 - EVS sending volunteers; 2005 - EVS sending and hosting volunteers. - Located in Belgrade, the capital city of Serbia.
TK	Community Volunteers Foundation (<u>Toplum Gönüllüleri Vakfi</u>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Youth NGO founded in 2002 and EVS-accredited since 2008: the organisation focuses on creativity and culture, youth participation, ICT and digital competences - Active in sending and hosting volunteers with fewer opportunities and/or focuses its work on the inclusion of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds – those with social, cultural and economic obstacles - Located in Istanbul
UA	<u>Green Cross Society</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A small NGO supporting people with disabilities - Implementing EVS projects since 2007: currently sending and receiving volunteers - Located in Lviv, which is the largest, middle-income city in western Ukraine, located approximately 70 kilometres from the Polish border.
UK	<u>Volunteering Matters</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Established in 1962 as Community Service Volunteers. Now works with approximately 30 000 volunteers each year in

		<p>England, Scotland and Wales</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EVS-accredited since 1997 when the Pilot Action started – EVS projects focus on youth participation, EU citizenship and access for the disadvantaged - Has vast experience in hosting EVS volunteers with fewer opportunities, in particular those with educational difficulties and social or economic obstacles - Has a physical environment suitable for young people with physical, sensory or other disabilities and also has additional mentoring or other support suitable for young people with social obstacles, educational difficulties, cultural differences or similar - Located in London, England
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Step 3: Design of tools for qualitative data collection

The approach to the case studies was to examine in detail concrete examples of EVS impact by collecting qualitative data through targeted interviews. The focus is on understanding the 'stories' around EVS. Each case study addresses all three levels of impact (individual, organisational and local community) and sheds light on the situation before and after EVS in view of providing comparable data for the impact analysis.

Three separate topic guides were prepared so as to target the questions according to the profile of the respondent and each topic guide was revised following the review of preliminary findings and the discussion of first findings at a stakeholder seminar. In addition, prompts were added to some of the questions based on the types of impacts identified in the refined impact framework. Other relevant findings from the literature review were also taken into account in the interview guides, such as the diverse motivations for transnational volunteering and the different 'profiles of volunteers'.

The topic guides were designed to gather specific information from the target groups:

- **EVS volunteers and alumni** were encouraged to explain their motivation for volunteering abroad, to provide examples of the tasks they worked on and to tell their 'story' of the influence of their EVS experience on their life, and the contributing factors.
- **Staff at receiving organisations** were invited to report on how they involved volunteers, how they supervised them, and to provide examples of key contributions as well as information on changes in the organisation's ways of working, network structures, flow of ideas, etc. that can be linked to the EVS experience.
- **Staff at sending organisations** were encouraged to explain how they recruit EVS volunteers and how they prepare them for EVS, in particular those with fewer opportunities.
- **Members of the local community** were invited to report on how the EVS volunteer fitted in to the community, what benefits the presence and involvement of the EVS volunteers brought to the local community over time, and what concrete changes were noticeable.

The key aspects explored through interviews were as follows: 1) the 'stories' around the outcomes of volunteering through EVS; 2) the motivations for carrying out volunteering abroad through EVS; 3) how EVS may impact different people in different ways (youth with fewer opportunities); 4) the challenges encountered during EVS projects, including difficulties faced by volunteers as well as those encountered by the sending/receiving

organisations; 5) examples of 'successes' as well as 'failures' (examples of dropouts from EVS projects and the underlying reasons/factors behind dropout); 6) the factors that can maximise or hinder the benefits from EVS; and 7) the added value of the EVS in comparison to other transnational or national schemes.

The case study template was designed to present the perspectives collected from the target groups in a narrative form. Each case study follows the same structure, examining the EVS impacts at all three levels and capturing all different perspectives. Further questions were asked from interviewees, in particular researching their views about the weaknesses about the scheme, their proposals for increasing awareness about EVS (especially among young people with fewer opportunities) and their views on the added value of EVS in comparison to national volunteering schemes – and the answers to these questions have been integrated directly into the final analysis, opposed to the case study reports.

To ensure a consistent approach across the case studies, the core research team developed a guidance note for the case study researchers, who were also all briefed in person or over the telephone.

The case study reports were quality checked by the core research team in two phases. The first phase focused on data validation, with the core research team going through the case study reports to identify unclear and/or missing information. Feedback and clarification requests were sent to the case study researchers, who then revised the case study reports accordingly. The revised reports were then proofread and quality checked in the second phase of internal quality assurance.

The final case study reports are presented in Annex 1.

2.3 Sample description

2.3.1 Survey participants

Overall, 10 480 individual responded to the surveys. This includes responses from 8 600 individuals and almost 1 900 organisational representatives. However, as some respondents left certain questions unanswered, and others did not complete the questionnaire, the number of responses for individual questions was always to some extent lower.

Among the individual participants, all groups of EVS volunteers were represented substantively, i.e. those still to commence or in the first half of their stay (EVS PRE), those in the final phase of their stay or having completed it (EVS POST), and EVS 'alumni' who had completed their stay before the end of the year 2015 (EVS-ALUM). The number of non-EVS volunteers without an international experience was lower, with 351 participants overall. Nevertheless, this number is sufficient to serve as a control group.

Table 2-8 Number of respondents per target group

Target groups	Number of respondents	Share (%) of all respondents
Individual participants	8 600	82%
- EVS PRE	- 2 264	- 22%
- EVS POST	- 3 118	- 30%
- EVS Alumni	- 2 867	- 27%
- Non-EVS volunteers	- 351	- 3%
Organisations	1 880	18%

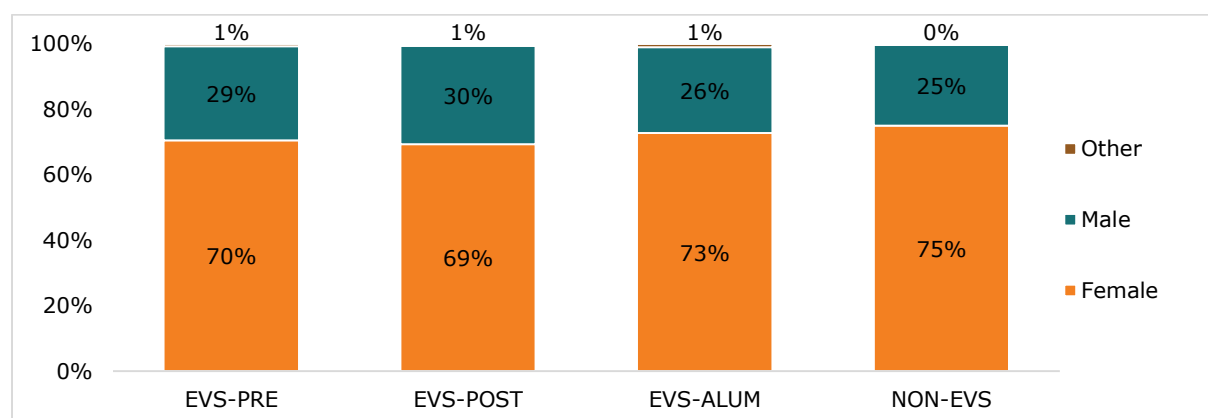
TOTAL	10 480	100%
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Individual participants

The following section describes the composition of the sample of individual participants in more detail.

The **gender** composition of the sample was rather consistent, with female participants representing the majority of the sample in all target groups, including the control group. Less than 1% of participants considered themselves representatives of an 'other' gender.

Figure 2-2 Gender distribution of individual participants



In terms of **geographical distribution**, the programme countries were grouped into four regions using the official regions defined by the United Nations⁴⁴ (Northern, Southern, Eastern and Western Europe), thus following the logic of the Erasmus Impact Study (EIS) Regional Analysis and enabling a comparison of the results. All the European regions were represented in the sample, with Southern Europe being the most frequently represented and Northern Europe the least frequently represented, both in the case of outgoing and incoming EVS participants.

The partner countries neighbouring the EU were listed individually in the survey and later grouped into the four official regions⁴⁵ (Western Balkans, Eastern Partnership Countries, South-Mediterranean Countries, Russian Federation), while the rest of the partner countries were summarised in one category termed 'Other'.

⁴⁴ See the United National Statistics Division – 'Composition of macro geographical regions, geographical sub-regions and selected economic and other groupings': <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/m49/m49regin.htm#europe>

⁴⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/sites/erasmusplus/files/files/resources/erasmus-plus-programme-guide_en.pdf

Figure 2-3 Home regions of individual participants

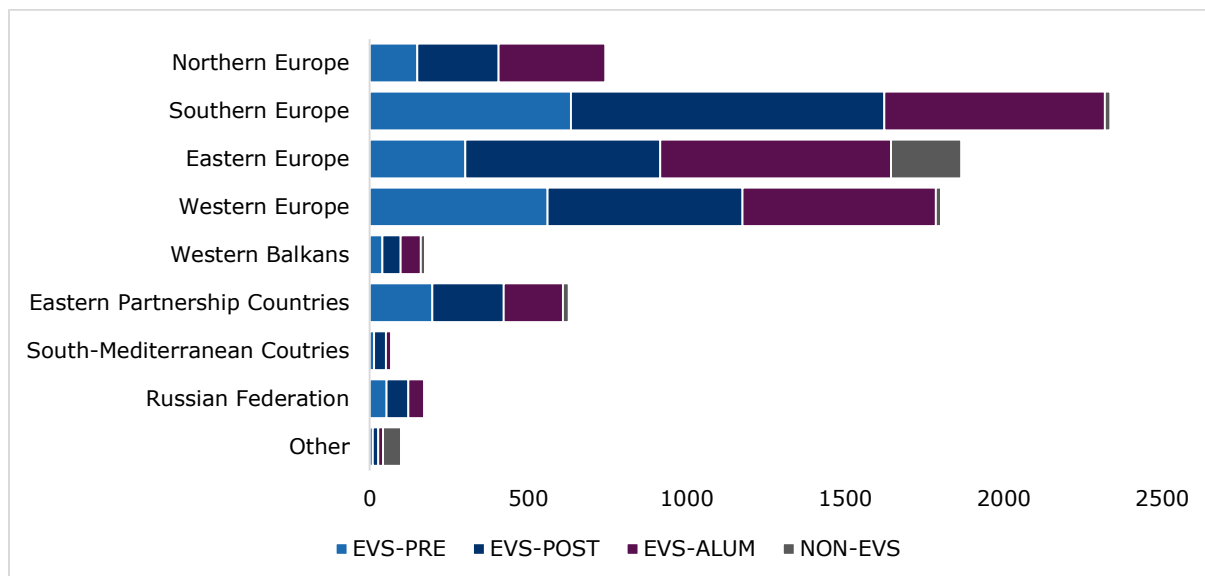
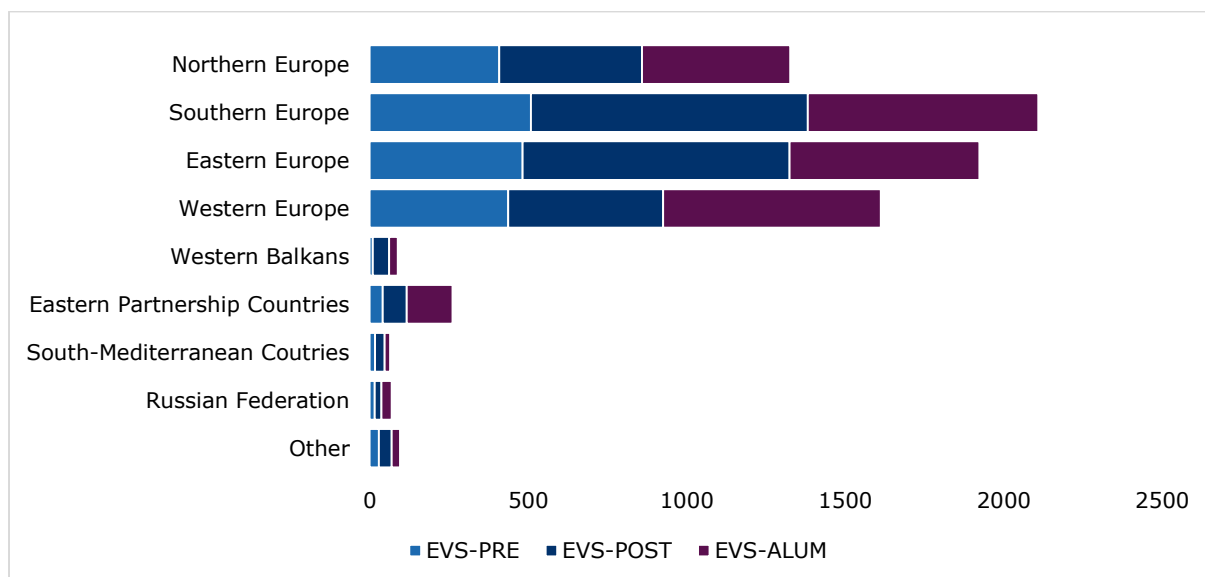


Figure 2-4 Host regions of individual participants



The largest numbers of participants came from Germany and Spain, which were also the most frequent host countries. In general, the sample of individual participants showed relatively even distribution in terms of individual countries: there were 35 countries with at least 10 incoming respondents in every category (PRE, POST, Alumni), and 34 countries with at least 10 outgoing respondents in every category.

Figure 2-5 Top 10 home countries of individual participants

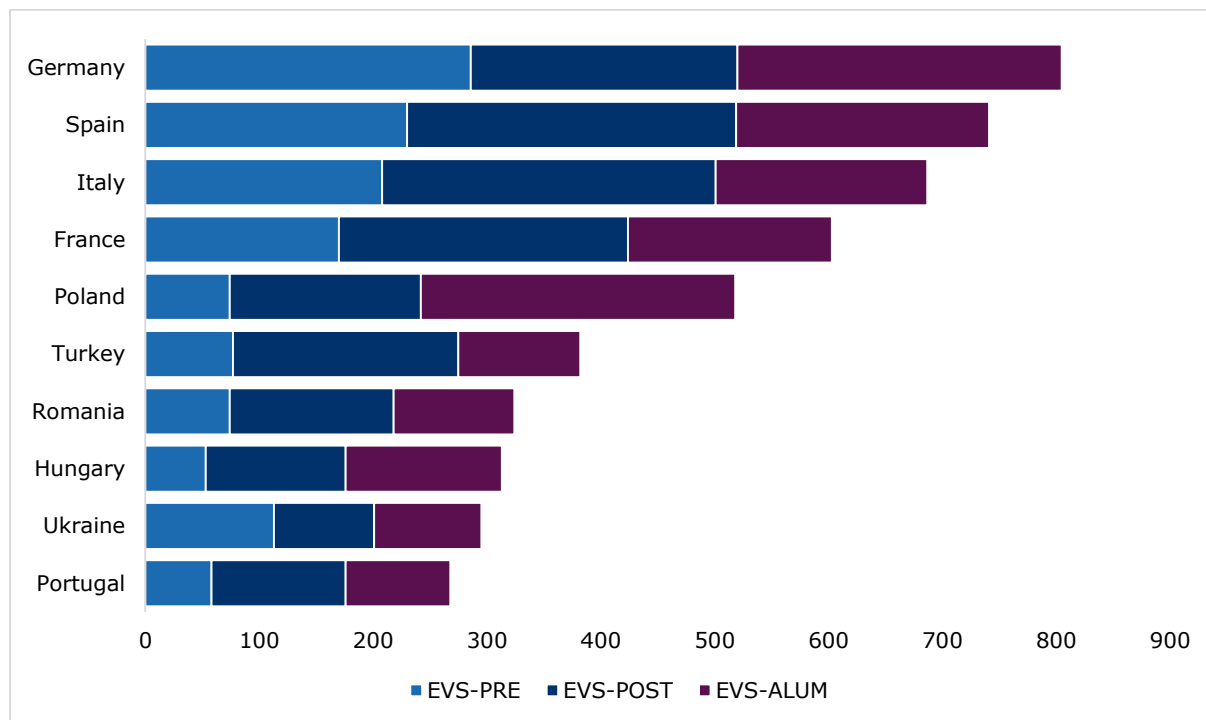
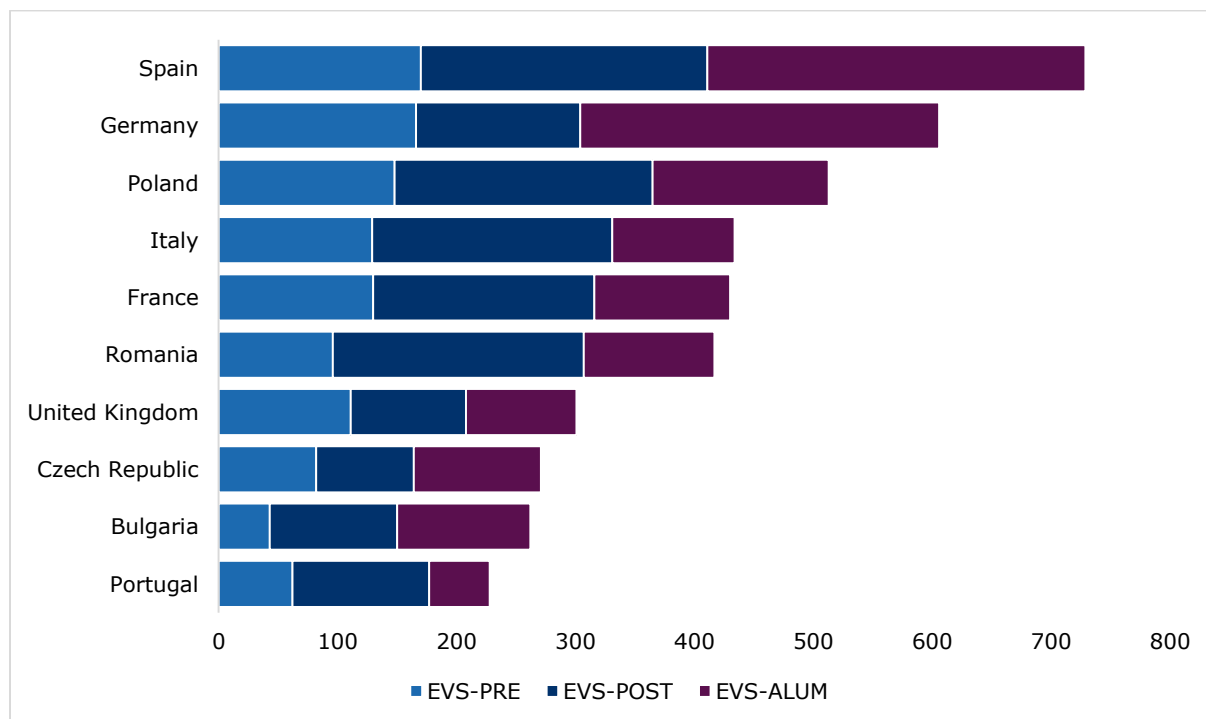
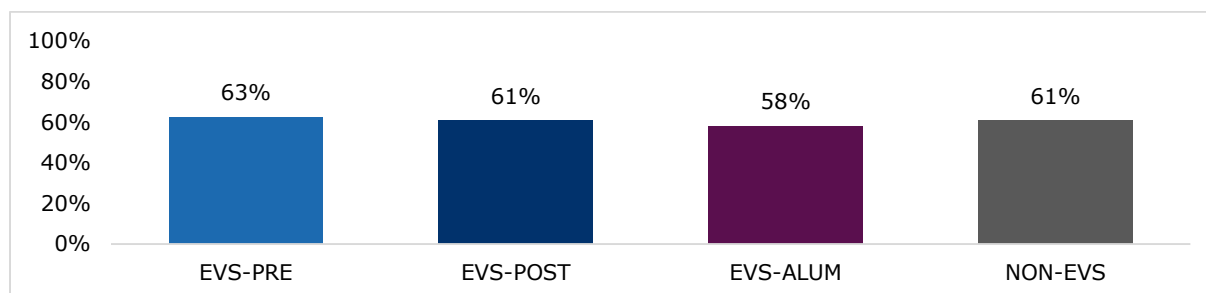


Figure 2-6 Top 10 host countries of individual participants



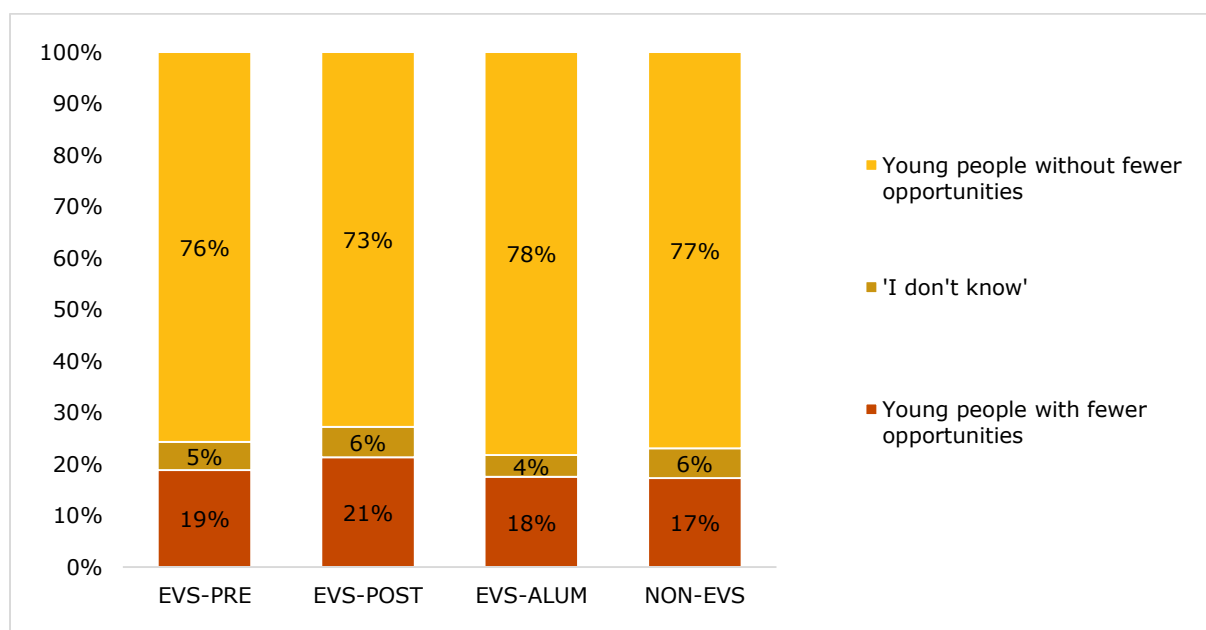
Both participants with and without an academic family background were well represented in the sample of individual participants. The share of participants with an **academic family background** was approximately 60% in all target groups, including the control group. The sample of individual participants was therefore very consistent in terms of family background.

Figure 2-7 Individual participants with an academic family background



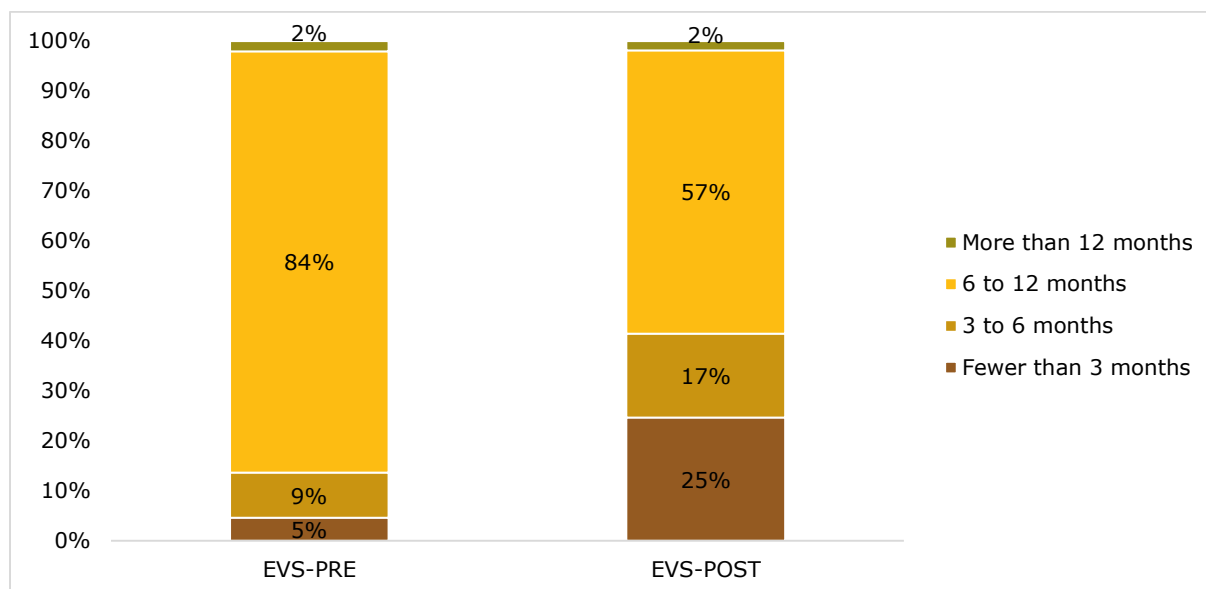
Young people with fewer opportunities (self-reported) represented approximately 20% of the sample and their share was again consistent across all the target groups. An additional 5% 'did not know' whether they were disadvantaged compared to other participants. Overall, we were able to identify 1 484 persons with fewer opportunities, in particular unemployed jobseekers (37%) and individuals originating from remote or rural areas (19%). In 12% of cases, participants described their situation as precarious due to housing difficulties or living below the poverty margin. These issues are further explored in the next chapter.

Figure 2-8 Individual participants with fewer opportunities



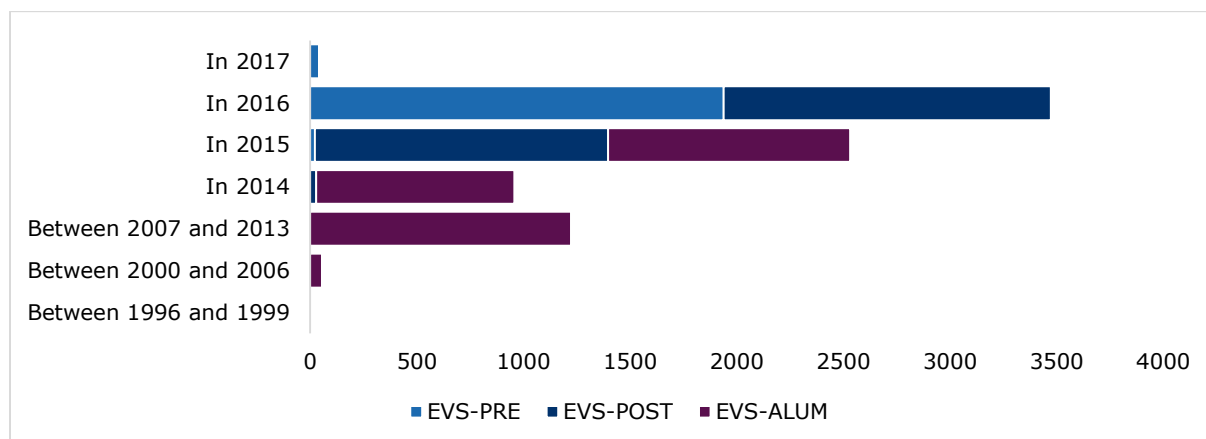
In terms of the **duration** of the EVS stays of current volunteers, the majority of the respondents took part in the programme for a period of 6 to 12 months. In the group of post-return volunteers, 25% of participants stated that they had been abroad for fewer than three months.

Figure 2-9 Length of EVS stays



In line with the timing of the survey, the majority of the group of pre-departure respondents started their EVS mobility placement in 2016, while the post-return group departed in 2015 or 2016. The EVS alumni respondents were spread over a longer time period: substantial numbers of alumni participated in the EVS under the new Erasmus+ programme (as of 2014), or in the Youth in Action programme (2007–2013). In contrast, the feedback rate of alumni who participated before 2007 was rather limited.

Figure 2-10 Year of EVS experience

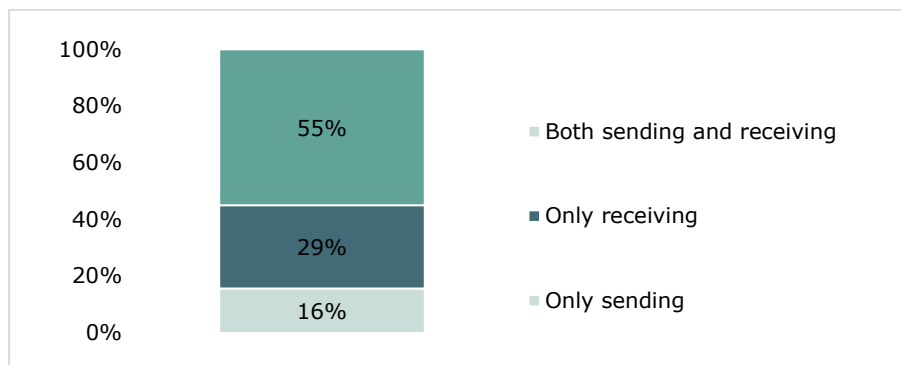


Organisations

The sample of organisations is described in more detail below.

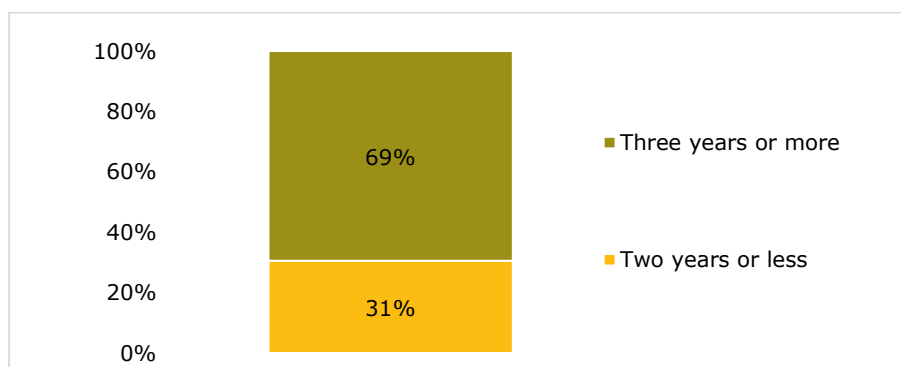
Most of the participating organisations (55%) were involved in the EVS programmes both as a sending and a receiving organisation. Almost a third (29%) acted as receiving organisations only, while 16% sent but did not receive EVS volunteers.

Figure 2-11 Role of organisations in sending/receiving EVS volunteers



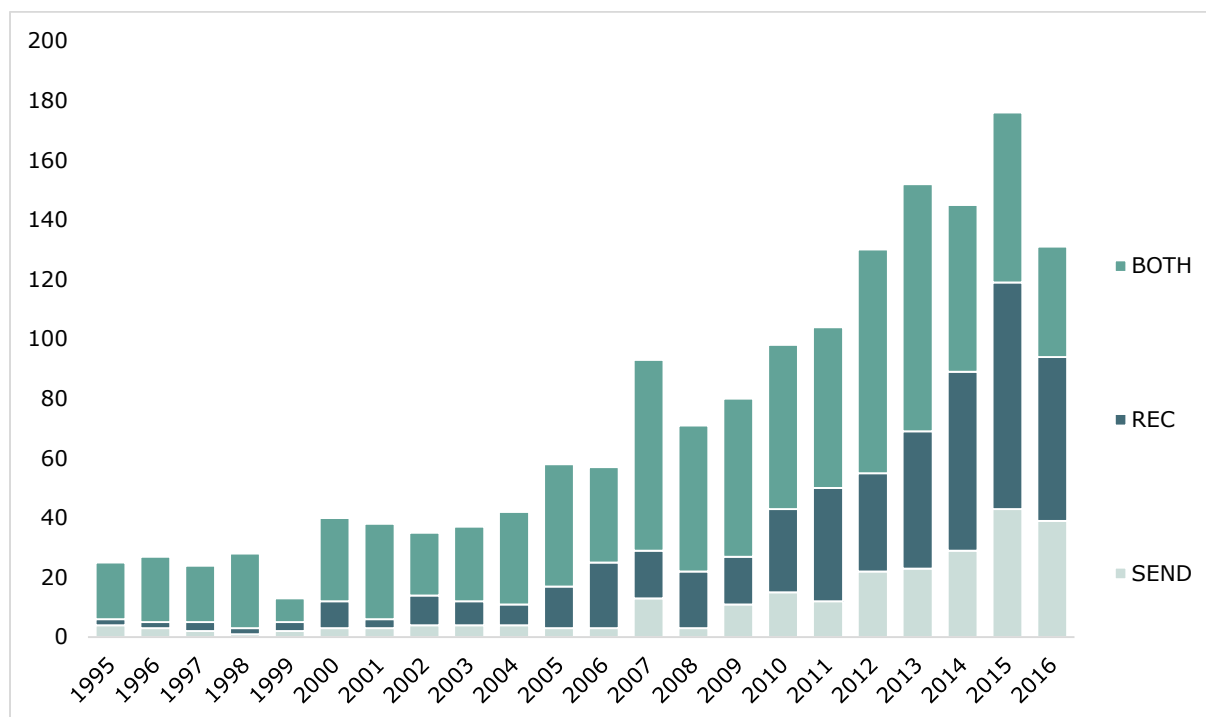
In total, 69% of participating organisations were involved in the EVS programme for three or more years. The institutional feedback was thus based on long-term experience with the EVS. Moreover, 26% of the responding organisations had begun to participate in the EVS as early as 2006 or before, and 85% of those who completed the survey continued to participate in the EVS at the time of the survey.

Figure 2-12 Length of participation in EVS



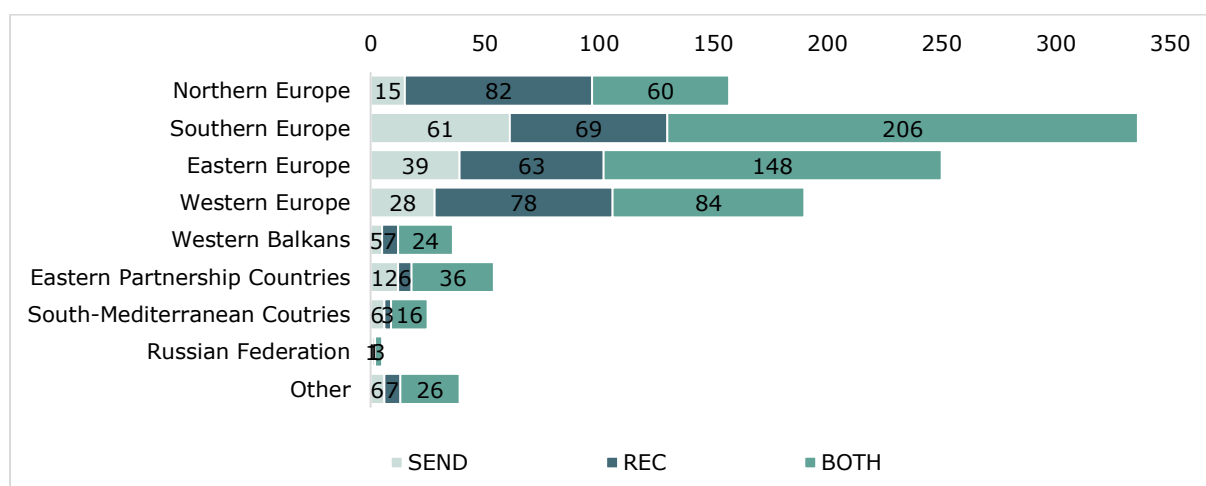
While almost two thirds of organisations that began to participate in 2010 or earlier both sent and received volunteers, two thirds of those that joined the programme after 2014 acted in only one capacity, either sending or receiving volunteers. This might indicate that a) the character of organisations having recently joined the programme differs from those that joined in the previous decade or before, or that b) organisations which start participating as sending or receiving organisations usually assume both roles only after they have been involved for a few years. The case study evidence suggests that the second option is the most common explanation for this trend.

Figure 2-13 Year in which organisations started to participate in EVS



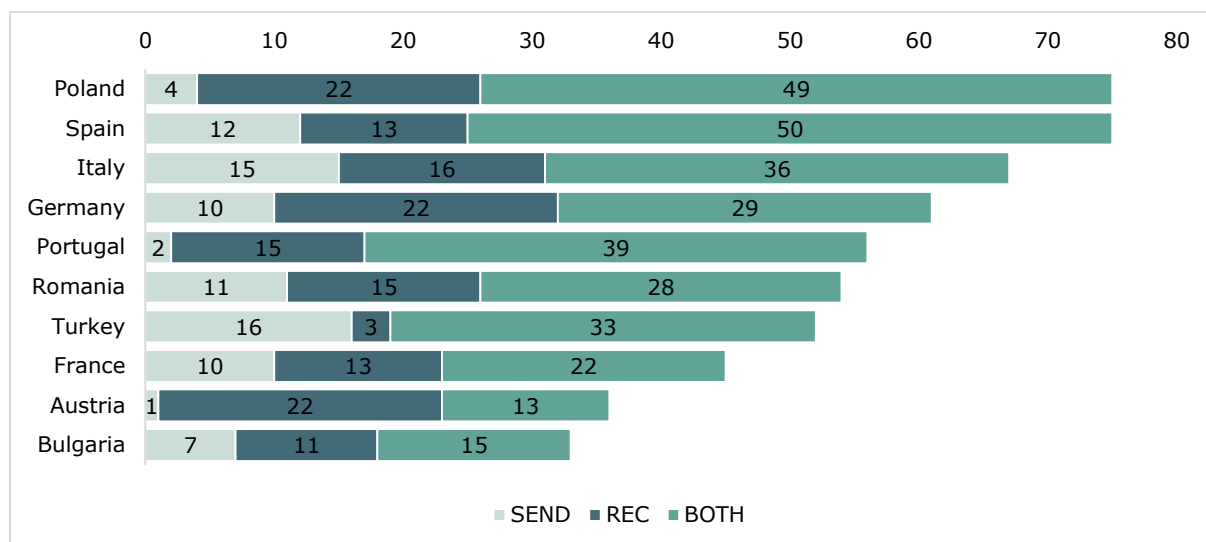
In terms of geographical distribution, the responding organisations represented all the European regions, and also to a substantial extent the non-European regions, especially the Eastern Partnership Countries. A significant number of organisations selected the 'Other' option in the questionnaire, with many of them stating that they consider themselves international, operating in multiple countries.

Figure 2-14 Region of operation of participating organisations



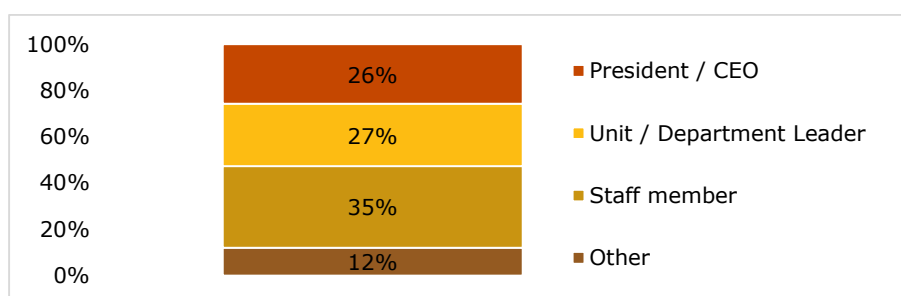
Organisations operating in Poland, Spain, Italy and Germany were the most represented in the survey, and these were also the most frequent home countries of individual EVS participants. In general, the sample of organisations showed relatively even distribution across individual countries: there were 31 countries with at least 10 responding organisations in total. Moreover, a substantial proportion (13%) of non-European organisations were involved.

Figure 2-15 Top 10 countries of operation of participating organisations



Over half of the organisational surveys were completed by managing representatives (CEOs or unit heads). This reflects the fact that most of the EVS organisations sampled are very small in terms of number of employees (see Chapter 3.3 for more details).

Figure 2-16 Representatives of the organisations completing the survey



2.3.2 Case study participants

A total of one hundred interviews were carried out as part of the 15 case studies. On average, 6.7 interviews were conducted per case study. As shown by Table 2-9, EVS volunteers constituted the largest share of interviewees (41% of all interviewees). Out of all 41 interviewed volunteers, 22 were current volunteers and 19 were alumni. Ten interviewed volunteers identified themselves as coming from a background with 'fewer opportunities'. The representatives of EVS organisations covered just over a third of all interviewees, while local community members constituted a quarter of interviewed stakeholders.

Table 2-9 Profile of interviewees

Background of interviewees	Number of interviewees	Share (%) of all interviewees
Current or former EVS volunteers	41	41%
EVS organisations	35	35%
Local community	24	24%
Total	100	100%

The interviews covered a diversity of volunteer profiles. The current and former EVS volunteers interviewed as part of the assignment came from 18 different countries (Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, Turkey, United Kingdom and Ukraine). They represented a diversity of different ages, ranging from between 17 and 30 years of age during their EVS placement, with the majority being aged between 21 and 25 when they completed their EVS. Most were taking (or had taken part) in a long-term EVS, with their placement lasting 9–12 months, and the majority of the interviewees had completed bachelor's or master's degree-level studies or were taking a gap year from higher education at the time of their EVS. A minority of interviewees (2) were regarded as early school leavers in that they held only a lower secondary qualification at the time of their EVS, while a further three were graduates from upper-secondary-level studies. Those who regarded themselves as coming from a disadvantaged background stated that this was so due to the socioeconomic background of their family (in comparison with their peers), low level of education, nationality (coming from a non-EU country and thereby facing visa problems), or ethnic minority background. Several other interviewees acknowledged that they do not come from wealthy backgrounds, but as they did not feel they lacked other types of opportunities in life, they did not consider themselves as coming from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The case studies captured the perceptions of EVS organisations' staff members who are in direct contact with EVS volunteers (such as volunteer supervisors, mentors and coordinators) and staff in higher management positions with a more strategic role. Three out of five staff interviewees (60%) were EVS project managers and volunteer mentors, while the rest (43%) were directors, presidents and other higher-level managers in EVS organisations. The majority worked at NGOs, while the staff interviewees in two countries (Estonia and Finland) were local authority employees.

Interviews were also conducted with local residents who have witnessed EVS activities, have benefited from them or have been in contact with EVS volunteers in other ways. This included representatives from local NGOs (organisations supporting or representing specific groups of people, such as the Roma community, people with disabilities, etc.).

Table 2-10 Background of local community interviewees

Background of interviewees	Number of interviewees	Share (%) of all interviewees
Local NGOs	8	33%
Teachers/social workers	6	25%
Direct beneficiaries or parents of direct beneficiaries	5	21%
Local authority/youth office/public employment service	4	17%
Other local residents	1	4%
Total	24	100%

2.4 Data analysis

This part presents the steps taken and methods employed to carry out the quantitative and qualitative analyses.

2.4.1 Quantitative data analysis

The quantitative data analysis focused on four aspects:

1. the description of the sample;
2. the profiles of the different target groups;
3. the impact on three major areas (employability and career prospects, participation in civic and political life, social inclusion); and
4. the impact on other areas.

Further information on the data processing methods and approaches used is provided below.

Data processing

For the purpose of analysis, all data were extracted from the online survey. The answers per question and per each item were calculated as percentages for easier reading and comparison. For the profiles of EVS volunteers and alumni (Chapter 3), we differentiated between people with and without fewer opportunities, while organisations were divided into three groups: sending-only, receiving-only, or both. Table 2-1 (above) on the impact dimensions derived from the literature review served as the basis to allocate the results of the questions in the survey to the respective impacts in the impact assessment (Chapter 4). The analysis focused on general findings from the survey across target groups (e.g. findings relating to EVS volunteers compared to findings about alumni and organisations) which allowed us to triangulate the observations based on multiple perspectives.

Secondly, respondents from individual programme countries were grouped into four pre-defined regions – Eastern Europe, Northern Europe, Southern Europe and Western Europe. Other countries were grouped according to the regions defined in the Erasmus+ Programme Guide⁴⁶. However, since there are few EVS participants from these countries, in most cases their results were merged under one 'other region'.

To facilitate the interpretation of the results, we focussed on the essential information pertaining to each question. For example, if the answers to a certain question were 'very important (25%)', 'important (50%)', 'not so important (15%)', and 'unimportant (10%)', we displayed the value for very important/important (75%). In case of multiple response questions, we present the results per choice and, where applicable, calculated cumulated values (how many of the items were chosen, which were the most chosen items, etc.). Where applicable, the results of the EVS Survey were also compared to the previous evaluations conducted in 2010 and 2011 under the Youth in Action programme⁴⁷. In cases where the questions were identical, numbers from both reports were presented next to each other.

Significance tests and effect sizes were calculated where applicable in order to identify areas of statistically substantial impact and streamline the analysis.

⁴⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/sites/erasmusplus/files/files/resources/erasmus-plus-programme-guide_en.pdf

memo[®] psychometric evaluation of personality development

The memo[®] methodology was applied to analyse the personality development of EVS participants. memo[®] is a unique psychometrical tool designed to measure personality traits and how these are affected by various experience, in particular international mobility.

The method is based on a state-of-the-art research findings and it was further shaped by a combination of research methods and validation of multiple samples of respondents. The results of previous studies on employability of graduates, mobility impacts and psychometric aspects played a crucial role in the memo[®] method development, including the European Parliament study on improving the participation in the Erasmus programme (2010), The VALERA study (Professional Value of Erasmus Mobility – a study by the International Centre for Higher Education Research, 2006), and The Flash Eurobarometer study (Employers' perceptions of graduate employability – Gallup Organisation requested by European Commission, 2010). The methodology was successfully applied in the Erasmus Impact Study (2014) and the subsequent Regional Analysis (2016) as well as other research projects.

In case of this study, six “memo[®] factors” were measured (personality traits) that were proven before to be positively related to employability and career success. These factors are: Confidence, Tolerance, Problem-solving, Curiosity, Self-assessment and Decisiveness.⁴⁸

Data weighting

Data weighting was applied to the quantitative data in order to increase their representativeness. This weighting ensured that no group of participants is over- or underrepresented in the sample, thus possibly biasing the results.

EVS participant database statistics were used to weigh the data of current volunteers (i.e. those prior to departure, during their stay, or shortly after return), based on the following characteristics:

- gender
- home region
- age category (under 21; 21 to 25 years; 26 years and older)
- length of stay (fewer than 10 months; 10 months or more)⁴⁹.

The breakpoints for the groups were set with respect to proportion of the group.

In order to prevent a situation in which a single respondent obtains too high a weight, relatively broad categories were used and the sample for PRE and POST participants was merged. Data for other respondent types (EVS alumni, non-EVS volunteers, organisations) were not weighted since sufficient population data were not available.

The use of Cluster Analysis to analyse the profiles of EVS volunteers

The data for current volunteers were further analysed by a cluster analysis (CA) to **identify unique archetypes of EVS volunteers** based on their sociodemographic characteristics. Thus, CA allows us to differentiate the results of the research for major types of EVS participants, in order to identify which of the effects are present for all (or close to all) volunteers, and which appear for only part of the group. This way, CA provides a more complex picture of the participants and their experience.

⁴⁸ For more on the memo[®] methodology, see <http://www.memo-tool.net/>

⁴⁹ The median length of stay is 10 months.

How does cluster analysis work?

Cluster analysis is a sophisticated method that is particularly useful when a classification of units (objects, respondents, etc.) is required. Cluster analysis sorts respondents into disjoint groups – clusters – based on their ‘similarity’ in selected characteristics, putting together those with similar attributes and separating those with different ones. To achieve this, the method uses a set of measurements for expressing ‘similarity’ between two respondents.⁵⁰

CA is an explorative analysis that attempts to identify structures within the data *a posteriori*. In other words, it is used **to identify groups** of cases if the grouping is **not previously known**. Therefore, the method is data-driven (not theory-driven) and it is the task of the researcher to interpret the results and name the identified clusters *ex post*.

How did we proceed?

When performing CA, the calculation is run repeatedly with various sets of characteristics, excluding the least significant ones (with low predictor importance measured⁵¹) after each iteration. In this way, the result with the strongest cluster quality⁵² based on a small set of best profiling variables can be achieved. We performed CA exclusively for current volunteers, i.e. those before departure, during their stay abroad, or shortly after return. It would also be possible to perform the same analysis for the group of EVS alumni. However, the results would naturally be different and thus not comparable with those of current volunteers. We started our analysis with a set of sociodemographic characteristics and perceptions. The following characteristics proved to be the most powerful in terms of profiling respondents into homogeneous clusters: age, home region of the respondent, occupational status, and perceived disadvantage (young people with fewer opportunities).

Based on these variables, we obtained five clusters with a fair cluster quality⁵³, describing the following specific respondent ‘archetypes’ (in descending order by size).

1. **‘Standard students’**: These are students at universities from across the whole of Europe and other regions, excluding Southern Europe, with an average age of nearly 24 years. No young people with fewer opportunities are included in this group.
2. **‘Mediterranean students’**: The profile of these students is almost the same as for the previous group except that all the ‘Mediterranean students’ come from Southern Europe and their average age is slightly higher – 24.5 years.
3. **‘Experienced workers’**: These volunteers were already employed full-time before taking part in EVS. They are more or less equally distributed across all countries, although Northern Europe was their most common home region and Southern Europe the rarest. Most are aged 26 or over and only a few young people with fewer opportunities are included in this group.
4. **‘Disadvantaged jobseekers’**: These participants are all recruited from among young people with fewer opportunities, most of whom were actively seeking a job

⁵⁰ Peter J. Rousseeuw (1987), ‘*Silhouettes: A Graphical Aid to the Interpretation and Validation of Cluster Analysis*’, Computational and Applied Mathematics.

⁵¹ Predictor importance indicates the relative importance of each predictor (variable) in estimating the model. See Marija J. Norušis (2011), *IBM SPSS Statistics 19 Advanced Statistical Procedures Companion*.

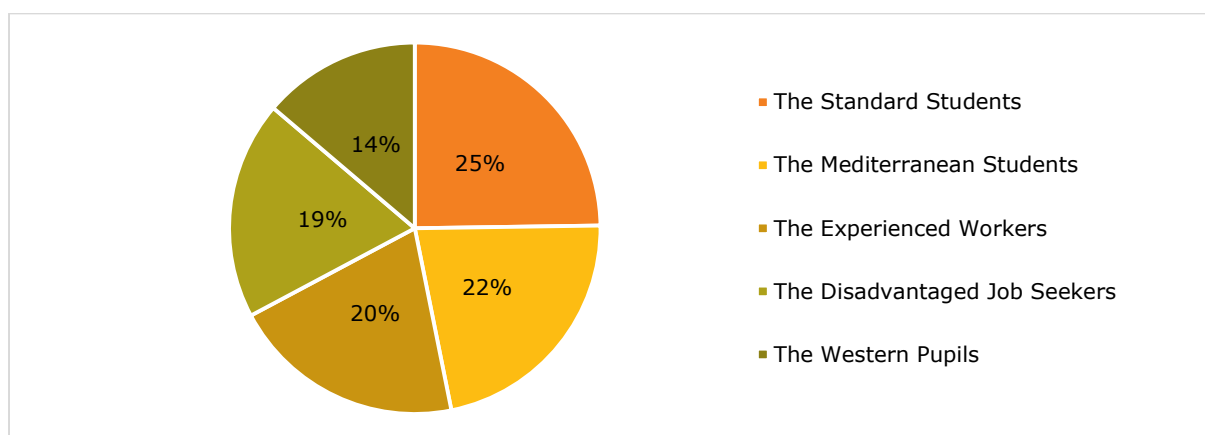
⁵² A measure that describes how similar an object is to its own cluster (cohesion) compared to other clusters (separation); it ranges from -1 to 1. See Norušis (2011), *IBM SPSS Statistics*.

⁵³ We use a default setting of SPSS, where -1.0–0.2 is considered as **poor** cluster quality, 0.2–0.5 is **fair** cluster quality, and 0.5–1.0 is **good** cluster quality. See Norušis (2011), *IBM SPSS Statistics*.

before taking part in EVS. They are spread equally across all regions and have an average age of 24.5 years.

5. **'Western pupils'**: This group includes upper-secondary pupils mostly from Western Europe, with an average age of 19 years. No young people with fewer opportunities and no participants from partner (non-programme) countries are included in this group.

Figure 2-17 Representation of individual archetypes of EVS volunteers



2.4.2 Qualitative analysis

The qualitative data analysis brought together findings from the literature review and the case study work in 15 countries. The NVIVO tool was used to conduct this qualitative data analysis. All reports were uploaded into NVIVO and then the information was coded by the level of impact (individual, organisational, local community). Furthermore, the information was then coded by impact area, according to the refined impact framework emerging from the literature review. As a result, extracts from the case studies were automatically sorted into the main impact areas of analysis. Based on these extracts, the core research team then prepared a narrative to present the findings from the qualitative data analysis for each impact area. The narrative placed a specific emphasis on concrete examples of impact, including quotations from interviewees, so as to complement and explain the survey findings.

These, together with the further insights collected through the interviews, such as recommendations of different stakeholders for the improvement of EVS projects and widening participation, were integrated directly into the main body of the report.

2.5 Stakeholder Seminar

The Stakeholder Seminar on the impact of transnational volunteering through the European Voluntary Service (EVS) took place on 15 November 2016 in Brussels. The event brought together various stakeholders from the volunteering sector in Europe, including policymakers and practitioners involved in the EVS as well as stakeholders involved in transnational volunteering policy and projects beyond EVS.

The Stakeholder Seminar was attended by 22 participants, including representatives of EVS alumni and EVS organisations, EU level representative organisations for volunteering and young people, the representatives of the European Commission and EACEA and representatives of National Agencies (a full list of attendees is listed in Table 2-11).

Table 2-11 Summary of the seminar participants

Type of organisation	Details	Number of participants
EU level representative of the volunteering or the youth sector	European Volunteer Centre (CEV), European Youth Forum, Youth for Exchange and Understanding (YEU), European Alliance for Volunteering (EAV), Alliance of European Voluntary Service Organisations (Alliance), European Federation for Intercultural Learning (EFIL)	6
National Agency implementing Erasmus+ programme	Austria, Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Spain, Sweden	8
European Commission	DG EAC, EACEA	2
Study team	CHE, ICF	3
Representatives of EVS volunteers	Ex-EVS Volunteers Youth Association in Turkey, a former EVS volunteer from Portugal	2
EVS organisations	ADICE (France)	1
Total		22

At the seminar, CHE Consult and ICF presented the preliminary results focusing on the profiles of EVS participants and the impacts of EVS on each of the three impact levels analysed (on individual volunteers, on the organisations involved, and on the local communities affected). Three group discussions were organised and dedicated to the topics of ensuring greater participation in EVS and improving EVS and maximising its impact. The recommendations and suggestions resulting from the seminar were related to the visibility of EVS, improving the quality of EVS projects and improving the EVS scheme in general. The recommendations and suggestions brought forward by the participants have been integrated into this report, especially in the Chapter 5.

The outcomes of the Stakeholder Seminar have also been reflected in the interpretation of findings in this report and in the second phase of case studies. With regard to the case studies, the interview guides were adapted, with additional questions on the issues explained in the box below.

Box 2-2 Additional areas of research for EVS case studies

- Accessing information about EVS: How did volunteers find out about EVS? Do they use the European Youth Portal?
- Use of Youthpass by EVS volunteers: Have EVS volunteers used the Youthpass to record informal and non-formal learning gained through EVS? If yes, how and to what extent is it helping them in obtaining employment?
- Views about the main weaknesses of EVS as a volunteering scheme: What are the main weaknesses? How could EVS be improved?
- Quality of EVS projects: How could the quality of EVS projects be improved?
- Involvement of more young people from a variety of backgrounds, including youth with fewer opportunities: How could EVS reach out to involve more young people? How could EVS be better 'advertised' among young people, especially among young people with fewer opportunities?

3 Profile of EVS participants

A summary of key findings

1. The **majority of EVS respondents in the survey are women**. However, there was a slightly greater gender balance among EVS volunteers who responded to the survey than in the control group of non-EVS volunteers, with 37% of current EVS volunteers being male against 25% in the control group of non-EVS volunteers.
2. The parents of the majority of EVS volunteers and alumni are educated to a tertiary degree level. This was the same for the control group of non-EVS volunteers. Only **a minority of EVS volunteers consider themselves being disadvantaged** compared to their peers. The share of current and former EVS volunteers considering themselves as coming from a background of 'fewer opportunities' was the same as for the control group of non-EVS volunteers (at around 17 - 19%). However, the representatives of EVS organisations feel that the share of participants with fewer opportunities is double the share of volunteers in the sample who self-reported themselves as disadvantaged. This means that either the organisations overestimate the share of such participants or many participants do not recognise themselves as having fewer opportunities. Given the large list of options the survey respondents could choose from, the team would consider the latter less likely.
3. **The majority of EVS participants have completed, are in the process of completing or are planning to complete tertiary education:** 61% of current EVS volunteers hold a tertiary level degree and among the EVS alumni, 74% held a tertiary degree at the time of the survey. The education level of EVS volunteers was slightly higher than that of the control group of non-EVS volunteers. Albeit there is evidence of EVS becoming more competitive with more EVS placements being advertised with more stringent skills and experience requirements, the findings nevertheless suggest that the apparent social selectivity should be perceived as a selectivity of volunteering as such rather than a unique characteristic of EVS as a volunteering scheme. The stakeholders are, however, keen to see **greater investment in 'supported placements'** (including additional funding to such placements, but also more advice, guidance, and mentoring for participants with fewer opportunities), which would allow more young people with fewer opportunities to benefit from EVS.
4. While 12% of current volunteers were actively looking for a job before going abroad and 11% of EVS alumni have found themselves in the same situation, this is the case for only 2% of non-EVS volunteers. This might indicate that **international mobility through EVS is more attractive for young people in a 'precarious' job situation**. They see EVS as an opportunity to a) gain skills and experiences that are attractive to employers and which will differentiate them from their peers, b) explore new and different career possibilities, and c) escape a precarious situation, be it (long-term) unemployment or unsatisfactory work, and identify new outlooks and a sense of direction. Indeed, **significantly more young people with fewer opportunities stated that they engaged in EVS in order to improve and widen their career prospects or wish to enhance their future employability (45% compared to 35% among young people without fewer opportunities)**.
5. In addition to work and career related goals, **an opportunity to make a**

difference to people's lives remains an important motivational factor. The most common source of motivation for current volunteers were **the opportunity to learn a foreign language** (87%), **meet new people** (86%) and **opportunity to live abroad** (84%), followed by soft skills development (78%) and benefits for career prospects (63%).

6. **Most EVS volunteers (70% of both current participants and alumni) had previous volunteering experience⁵⁴ before taking part in EVS** and a third had been abroad before as part of another longer-term scheme – i.e. three months or more –, such as Erasmus exchange or a work placement. The share of non-EVS volunteers who were mobile before was substantially lower at 20%.

Comparison of selected characteristics of current EVS participants, alumni and non-EVS volunteers

Characteristics	Current EVS volunteers	EVS alumni	Non-EVS volunteers ²
Female participants	63 %	73 %	75 %
Young people with fewer opportunities	19 %	18 %	17 %
Participants with a non-academic family background	39 %	42 %	39 %
Tertiary education degree holders	61% ¹	74 % ²	52 %
University students	28 % ¹	28 % ¹	30 %
Unemployed, actively looking for a job	12 % ¹	11 % ²	2 %
Previous long-term stay abroad	34 %	33 %	20 %

Notes: 1 – before taking part in the EVS, 2 – in the time of the survey

7. **The obstacles to participation are experienced proportionally to a greater extent (in terms of depth and breadth) by more vulnerable young people.** The following have been proposed as main methods to reach out to more young people:
- 1) appointment of EVS ambassadors (i.e. EVS alumni) tasked with spreading awareness about EVS through word of mouth, social media and talks at schools, youth centres and careers fairs;
 - 2) empowerment and training of frontline youth workers and those working in formal services, such as the PES, to raise awareness and increase young people's confidence to take up EVS;
 - 3) creation of new and use of existing peer-to-peer networks and other structures to raise awareness;
 - 4) advertising EVS as a supported mobility programme by investing more on the training of EVS mentors and pre- and post-mobility training for volunteers;
 - 5) introduction of quotas for the involvement of young people with fewer opportunities;
 - 6) use of 'youth-friendly' tools and channels for raising awareness, such as testimonials on YouTube; and 7) preparation of jargon-free information materials.
8. A need has been identified to **strengthen the support for sending**

⁵⁴ Previous volunteering experience means that the person has volunteered before, be it abroad or in the home country.

organisations to reach out to young people, support them with the application process, prepare them for mobility and provide follow-up after EVS.

9. Organisations with many years of experience in preparing EVS project applications have an upper hand, given the expertise acquired and available administrative resources. At the same time, active volunteers have the potential to make a big organisational impact in small, less organised organisations, meaning that it is **important to ensure a wider pool of EVS organisations**.

The previous chapter already shed light on the profile of those individuals and organisations that take part in the EVS. It showed how the overall EVS volunteer population is dominated by young women and participants from many of the largest EU Member States, such as Germany, France, Italy, Poland and Spain, with around a fifth of respondents classifying themselves as 'young people with fewer opportunities'. The organisational profile of participating EVS organisations showed that the majority are involved in both sending and hosting volunteers and more than two thirds have been involved in EVS for over three years.

This chapter takes a more in-depth look into the profile of different groups of EVS participants. In terms of individual volunteers, we will take a closer look at the profile of current and former EVS volunteers and comparing their characteristics with those of a control group of non-EVS volunteers. Further insights will also be provided on the profile of participating EVS organisations. The final part reviews the main obstacles individuals and organisations face in accessing EVS.

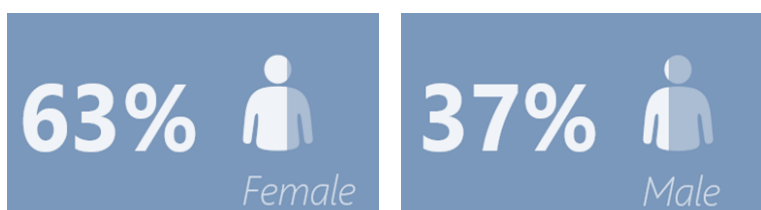
3.1 Current EVS volunteers

To profile the current EVS volunteers, we combined the information received from the EVS volunteers prior to and after their volunteering experience abroad. To increase representativeness, weighted data have been used for this group.

3.1.1 General characteristics

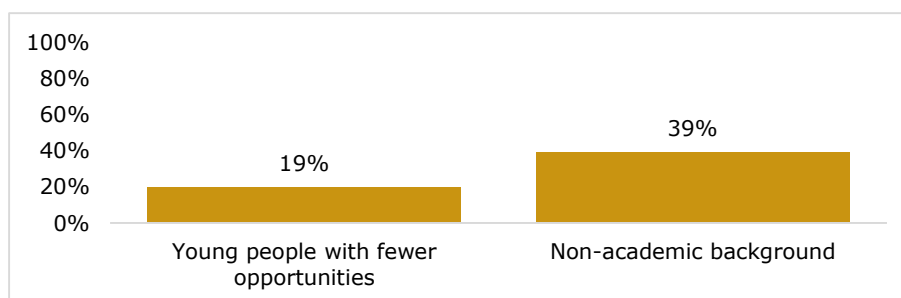
This part looks at the gender and age profile of current EVS volunteers and takes also a look at their education and labour market background.

Figure 3-1 Gender distribution of EVS volunteers



Almost two thirds of current EVS volunteers are female (63%)⁵⁵. The underrepresentation of male participants is also typical of tertiary education and other mobility schemes. For example, 60% of the Erasmus study mobility participants in 2013/2014 were female⁵⁶. However, there is a greater gender balance among current volunteers than among EVS alumni, considering that as many as 73% of former volunteers who responded to the survey were female (see Chapter 3.2. for further information).

Figure 3-2 Share of young people with fewer opportunities and a non-academic family background among EVS volunteers



Q: "Do you consider yourself to be at a disadvantage compared to other young people of your age at the time of your EVS participation?"
Answer "Yes"

Q: "Did your parents (father and/or mother) attend a higher education institution?"
Answer "No"
n = 4724

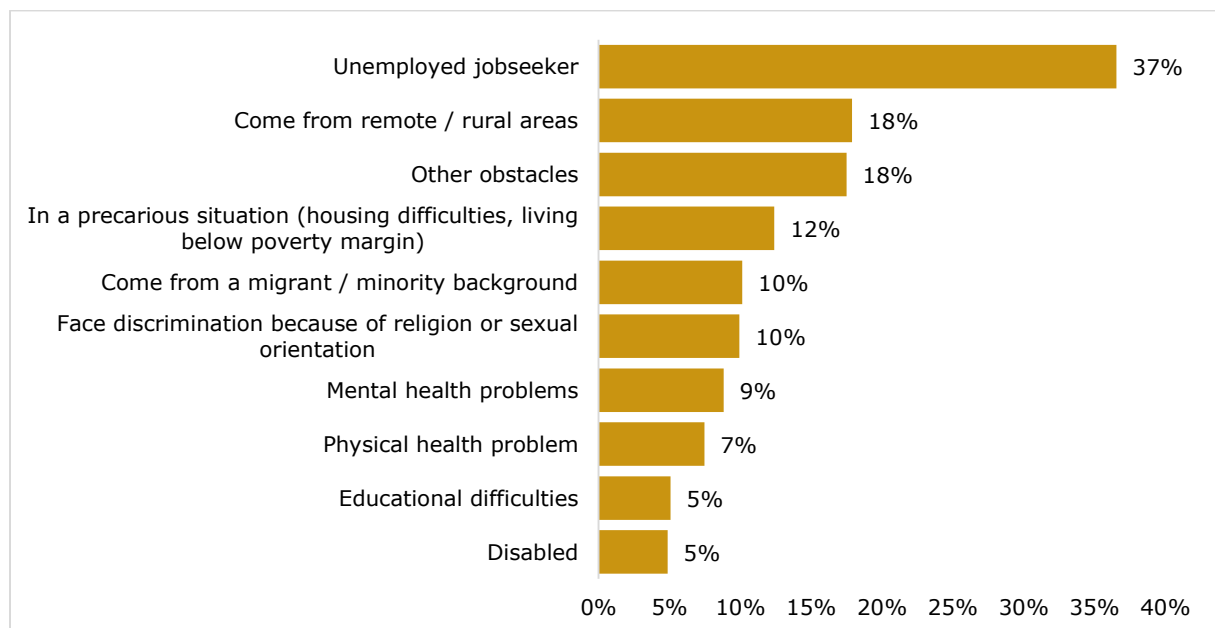
⁵⁵ As mentioned in Sample description above, close to 1% of respondents indicated their gender as "other", i.e. neither male nor female. However, as described in the section on data analysis, results for current volunteers were weighted according to the official EVS participation statistics in order to increase the representativeness. As there is no "other" gender reflected in the official database, the respective answer had to be considered a 'missing value' in data weighting.

⁵⁶ European Commission (2015). *Erasmus: Facts, Figures and Trends. The European Union support for student and staff exchanges and university cooperation in 2013-2014*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union (p.7).
http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/library/statistics/erasmus-plus-facts-figures_en.pdf

Almost two fifths (39%) of the EVS volunteers come from a non-academic family background. Just under one fifth (19%) of the participants consider that some aspects of the concept 'Fewer opportunities' apply to them, while an additional 6% state that they 'don't know' whether they are disadvantaged or not. To a certain degree these statistics confirm that EVS is a prestigious programme, in which individuals with better starting conditions are more likely to take part. However, the proportion of disadvantaged participants (19%) can be considered substantial, given that inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities is not the primary goal of the programme (albeit is an important element of it) and this figure also needs to be seen in the context of the organisations reporting a significantly higher share of participants from this group (see Chapter 3.4 for further information).

Among the participants identifying themselves as coming from a background of 'fewer opportunities', unemployment is by far the most frequent disadvantage, followed by a background of living in a remote or rural area and precarious situations such as housing difficulties or living below the poverty threshold. Mental and physical health problems as well as disabilities are substantially less represented among the current EVS volunteer population. One sixth of respondents stated that they faced 'other obstacles' when they were first thinking about participation to EVS, such as financial difficulties and struggling to cover their living expenses in the host country (although they did not live below the poverty margin in the home country) and negative stereotypes about their nationality in host countries. The findings related to financial struggles were confirmed by interviews with volunteers and EVS organisations, with many suggesting that the living expenses are not sufficient for many who are undertaking their placement in capital cities or other countries / cities with a high cost of living. Another reason given is the way in which the new distance calculator is being used to calculate travel distances for grant support. Several interviewees were of the opinion that this can be a substantial barrier for young people with fewer opportunities. Other cited reasons are family situation (including being an orphan or a single mother), language barriers and administrative barriers.

Figure 3-3 Ranking of types of fewer opportunities among EVS volunteers (multiple response)



Q: "Do you consider yourself to be at a disadvantage compared to other young people of your age?" (multiple response)
n = 4720

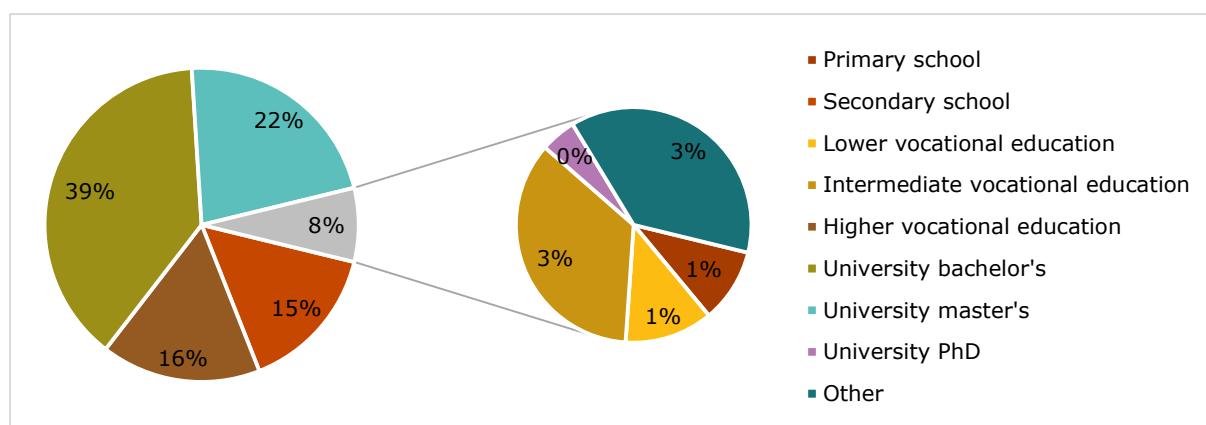
The challenge of self-reporting 'fewer opportunities'

The expression 'having fewer opportunities' was often perceived as pejorative by respondents, who did not wish to self-report themselves in such terms. Indeed, interviews with EVS participants revealed that self-assessment of the notion of 'fewer opportunities' is relative and can be interpreted differently.

'Compared to other young people in Europe I feel disadvantaged due to the visa regime, which is an obstacle for getting employment in a different country' **Serbian participant in EVS**

When volunteers were asked whether they feel disadvantaged, some said they do but indicated reasons that do not correspond to the 'fewer opportunities' criteria. For example, a Serbian volunteer mentioned visa issues as a major disadvantage. Other volunteers, whose life stories indicate that they would qualify to be considered as having had 'fewer opportunities', did not self-report as such. For example, one Latvian volunteer explained that her family did not have any money to travel or buy any significant luxuries but she still did not consider herself as coming from a disadvantaged background as she has had all the basics she has needed in life plus a very loving family, which many other young people do not have. This means that the actual number of EVS participants with 'fewer opportunities' may be higher than the survey results indicate.

Figure 3-4 Education level of EVS volunteers before embarking on EVS



Q: "What is your highest level of education attained?"

n = 4836

In general terms, 61% of current EVS volunteers already had an initial university degree before embarking on EVS. Almost two fifths (39%) had a bachelor's degree and 22% had a master's degree. The only other substantially represented educational levels were higher vocational training (16%) and secondary school (15%), while it might be expected that many volunteers who were high school pupils in the time of their EVS participation were going to attend a university later in life.

These survey findings go hand-in-hand with interview findings which suggest that EVS today attracts more 'experienced' young people than in the past. For example, the great majority of EVS participants interviewed were graduates of bachelor's- or master's-level studies or were taking a gap year from higher education at the time of their EVS. Indeed, a key finding was that the more recent the EVS project, the higher the volunteer's level of qualification or experience. An increasing number of EVS applicants either have been on an Erasmus exchange or have completed their entire university studies abroad.

Moreover, it is no longer rare for EVS participants to have previously worked in the third sector, as volunteers or as employees. This suggests that EVS has become a more 'competitive' activity type, which also means that organisations have a wider pool of experienced applicants to select from for their EVS projects. This trend was confirmed by some of the EVS organisations interviewed, which reported selecting only the most motivated volunteers who match their projects and activities, while taking on individuals from more disadvantaged backgrounds as part of special 'inclusion' projects.

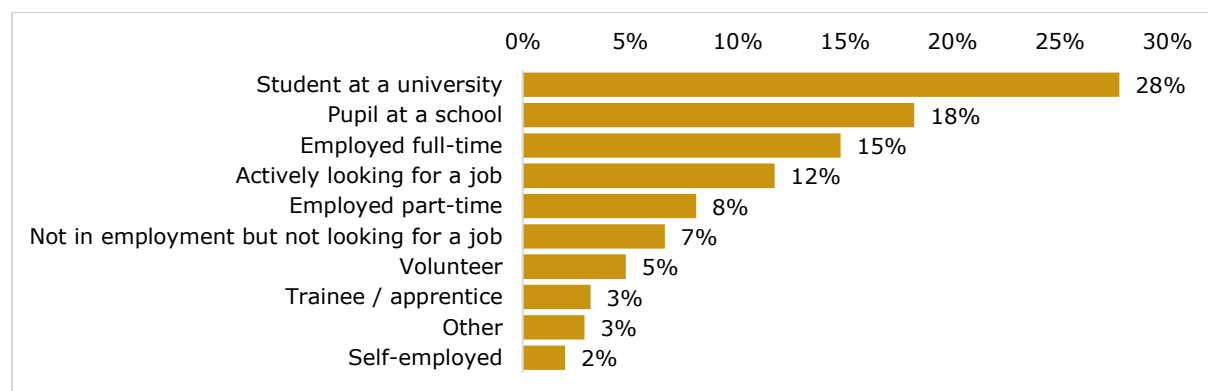
'Recently, we have received many applications from students who have been on Erasmus. They have the advantage of having contacts abroad and know to prepare their application' **EVS organisation, Portugal, 2016**

'Since the application process was simplified, we receive applications both from less motivated candidates or from candidates with more career-oriented objectives' **EVS organisation, Italy, 2016**

Another evident trend was the desire of the more 'experienced' EVS organisations to select older volunteer candidates, with the goal of providing an opportunity for unemployed youth to gain practical experience in their chosen sector, as opposed to take on younger and therefore potentially less independent and experienced candidates. Therefore, those applicants with experience in the field of

work of the organisation or in the NGO sector have higher chances of being selected for EVS projects. The selection process is even more competitive for applicants from non-EU countries, some of whom reported having applied to two or more – or even five – different EVS projects/organisations before being selected.

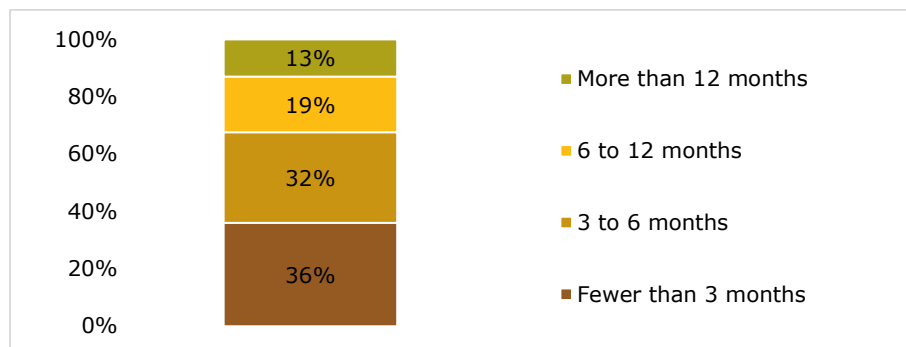
Figure 3-5 Occupation of EVS volunteers before their EVS experience



Q: "What was your occupational status before taking part in the EVS project?"
n = 4790

More than a quarter (28%) of the EVS volunteers are student at the time of engaging in EVS. A quarter (25%) were in some kind of employment or self-employed, and 21% were in school or completing a traineeship/apprenticeship. Just over one tenth (12%) considered themselves unemployed and looking for a job, while another 7% were also unemployed but not looking for employment.

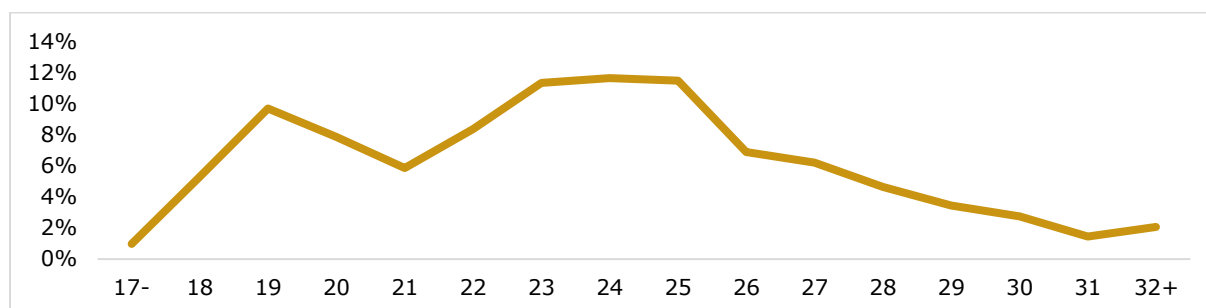
Figure 3-6 Distribution of EVS volunteers actively looking for a job



Q: "For how long have you been in this occupational status before participating in EVS?"
n = 4758

Among those who were actively looking for a job at the time of application, 13% can be considered as long-term unemployed (over 12 months). This translates into a long-term unemployment rate of less than 2% among those embarking on EVS (13% of 12%). Two thirds of jobseekers were in this situation for up to six months only and can thus be considered as short-term unemployed.

Figure 3-7 Age distribution of EVS volunteers



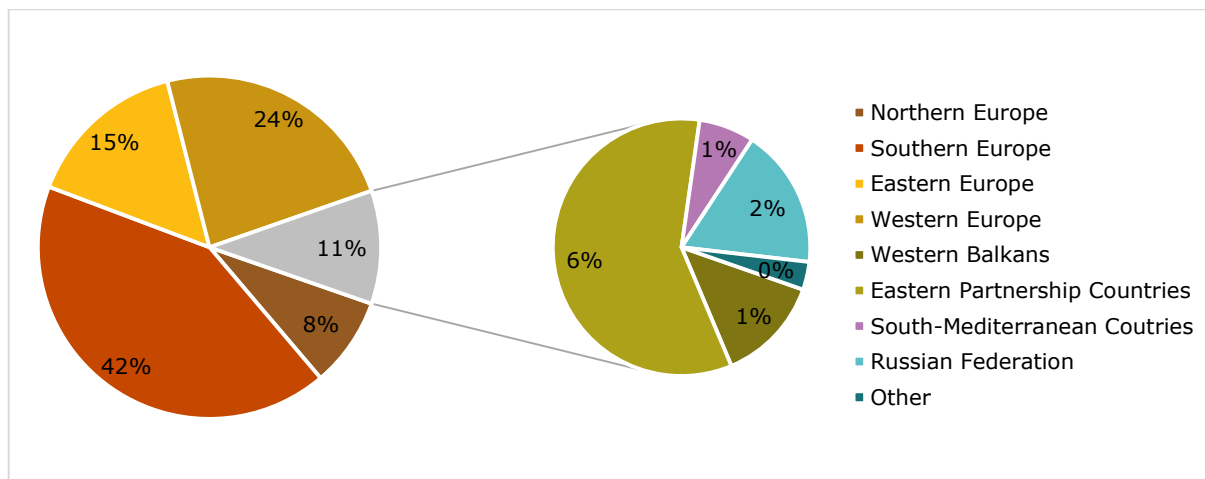
The typical age of a volunteer at the time of the survey was 23 to 25 years, with more than a third of the volunteers surveyed falling into this category. This age distribution is in line with previous findings indicating that the majority of volunteers had already graduated from university before participating in EVS. However, a specific subgroup of volunteers (23%) were aged 18–20: these were typically graduates of upper-secondary education who were taking a gap year before going to university or entering the labour market.

3.1.2 EVS-related characteristics

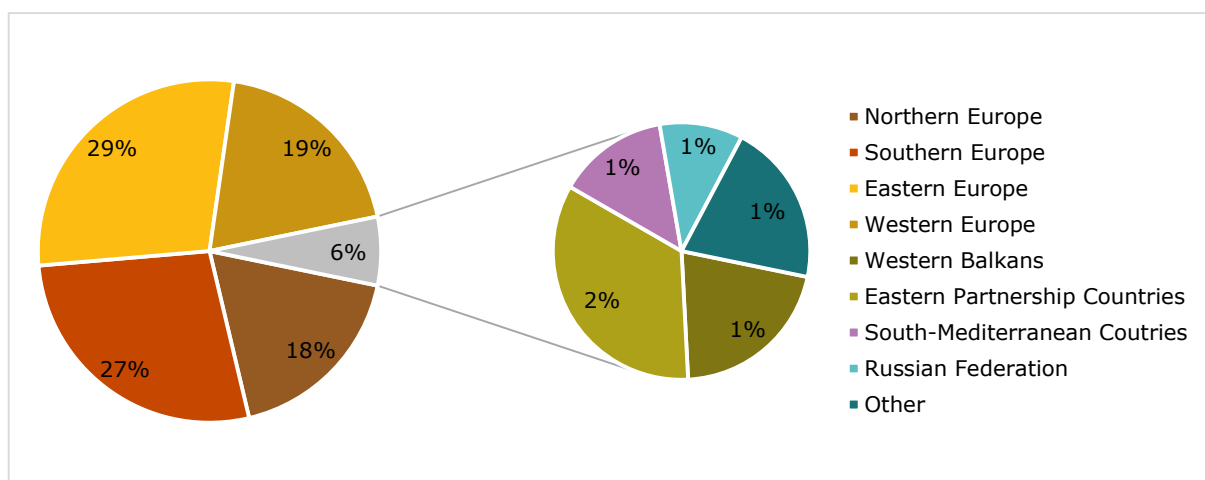
This part looks at characteristics that are more relevant to the EVS as a volunteering scheme, such as host and home countries and regions of volunteers, their motivation to apply and their background in terms of previous volunteering experience and participation to other mobility opportunities.

Figure 3-8 Host and home regions of EVS volunteers

Home regions



Host regions



Not all home and host regions were equally represented and not all imbalances were stereotypical. Southern Europe (42%) was the most common home region of volunteers, followed by Western Europe (24%). On the other hand, Eastern Europe (29%) was the most frequent destination, with Southern Europe ranking second (27%). Eastern and Northern Europe received substantially more volunteers than they sent, while the opposite was true of Eastern Partnership Countries in particular, which sent a very large number of participants (almost as many as Northern Europe in absolute numbers) but received far fewer than any EU region and only slightly more than other non-EU regions.

It is also useful to consider the flow of volunteers, i.e. the region from which they originated and the region to which they went to complete their EVS. The contingency table below reveals interesting patterns for some regions. A third of Southern Europeans stayed in the same region for their EVS service, while almost another third preferred to go to Eastern Europe. In contrast, the share of volunteers who were mobile within their own region was smaller in the other regions, representing a quarter of volunteers in Eastern Europe, a sixth in Western Europe, and even fewer in Northern Europe.

In line with them being the most represented participants overall, Southern Europeans formed the largest group of incoming volunteers in all regions except Northern Europe, where there were almost as many Western European participants. Volunteers from partner countries were distributed across Southern, Eastern and Western Europe to an almost equal extent, while Northern Europe hosted volunteers from partner countries to a slightly lesser extent.

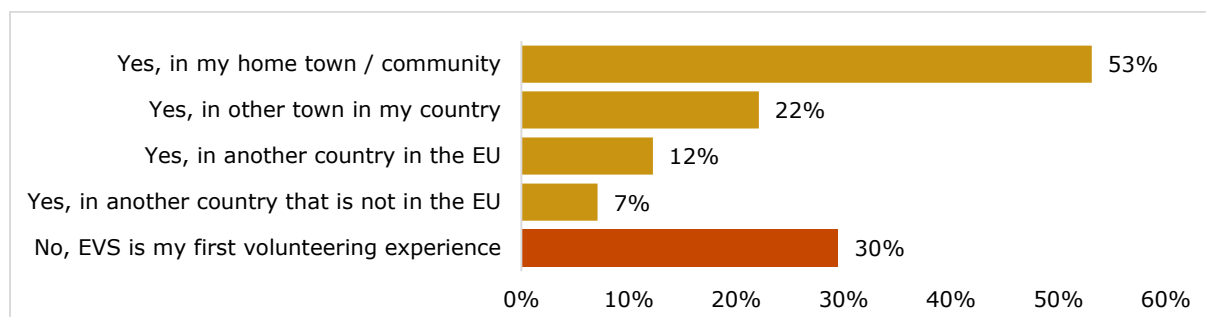
Table 3-1 Flows of EVS volunteers between regions

		Host region									
		Northern Europe	Southern Europe	Eastern Europe	Western Europe	Western Balkans	Eastern Partnership Countries	South-Mediterranean Countries	Russian Federation	Other	Overall
Home Region	Northern Europe	1.0%	2.8%	2.0%	2.0%	0.1%	0.3%	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%	8%
	Southern Europe	6.5%	11.6%	14.5%	7.4%	0.6%	0.5%	0.4%	0.1%	0.5%	42%
	Eastern Europe	2.2%	5.2%	3.6%	3.2%	0.2%	0.6%	0.0%	0.1%	0.2%	15%
	Western Europe	6.4%	5.1%	5.7%	4.1%	0.3%	0.8%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	24%
	Western Balkans	0.2%	0.5%	0.3%	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1%
	Eastern Partnership Countries	1.4%	1.4%	1.9%	1.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6%
	South-Mediterranean Countries	0.1%	0.3%	0.1%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1%
	Russian Federation	0.4%	0.5%	0.4%	0.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2%
	Other	1.0%	2.8%	2.0%	2.0%	0.1%	0.3%	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%	0%
	Overall	18%	27%	29%	19%	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%	100%

The findings from the interviews conducted with EVS volunteers and organisations suggest that there are differences in the profile of EVS participants from north-west Europe and south-east Europe. Many reported that younger volunteers (aged 17–20) are often from Germany, France or other Western European countries, who are usually taking a gap year after completing upper-secondary school. In a similar manner, many young volunteers from Northern Europe go on short-term placements as part of inclusion projects at home. **As an example of good practice, in Finland some individual PES (Public Employment Service) counsellors, who have close links to local EVS projects actively encourage young disengaged youth who are 'lost' in their education and employment path to consider EVS.** This is because they consider EVS inclusion projects as a supported opportunity to broaden horizons and to try and something new, which may boost the confidence of unemployed youth and motivate them to pursue further studies. At the same time, most of the interviewees who came from Eastern Europe were university graduates who saw EVS as an opportunity to gain new experiences and improve employability, before entering the labour market.

This qualitative finding is confirmed by the quantitative data. While the majority of EVS participants were 23 years old or over, there was a specific subgroup of younger participants aged 18 to 20, almost all of them from Western Europe, and a smaller proportion from Northern Europe.

Figure 3-9 Previous volunteering experience of EVS volunteers (multiple response)



Q: "Have you volunteered before?" (multiple response)
n = 4716

EVS is usually not participants' first volunteering experience. Almost three quarters (70%) of all EVS volunteers stated that they had already had volunteering experience, often more than once. For just over half (53%) of respondents, this experience was in their hometown, while 22% volunteered elsewhere in their home country (there was some overlap between these two groups as multiple responses were possible). Nevertheless, the nature and extent of the respective volunteering experience may vary substantially, from one-off events or ad hoc activities in the community to long-term quasi-professional work. Only 30% stated that they had no other volunteering experience before EVS.

Moreover, 34% of respondents had already been abroad as part of their studies or to complete an internship prior to EVS. In other words, a substantial proportion of volunteers already had previous experience of a long stay in a foreign country.

Data obtained through interviews for the case studies demonstrate that there are three main profiles of EVS volunteers. The first and the main one is one of civic-minded individuals interested in helping others or serving the community. The majority of the volunteers and alumni interviewed for the case studies reported having done volunteering or charity work prior to their EVS, most as regular volunteers at local level, with some being involved in short-term voluntary projects abroad (i.e. work camps). This

'Before my EVS, I spent three years and a half volunteering for a local NGO' **Slovak EVS volunteer, 2016**

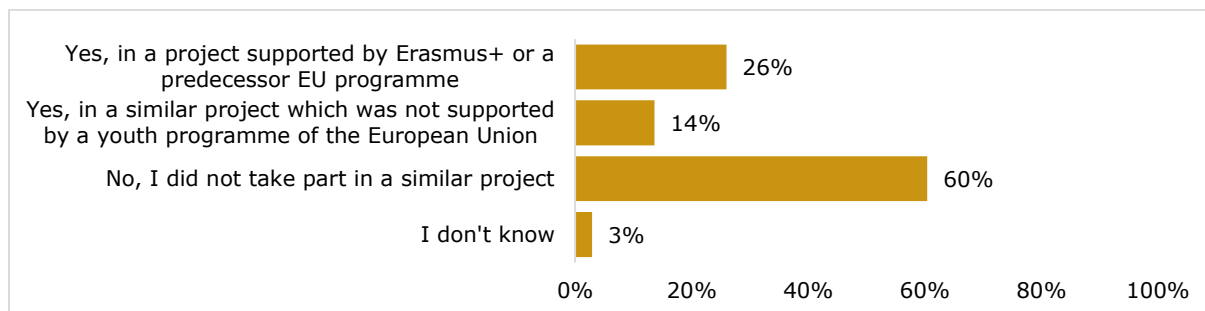
'I had several experiences as a volunteer in Poland and I worked for five years in an organisation developing projects for the European Union and coordinating volunteers, before I decided to enrol as a volunteer myself.' **Polish EVS volunteer, 2017**

suggests that many young people who do EVS already have strong values to begin with and thus the change that EVS produces in their outlook is probably not as high as might be expected.

But equally, many others are motivated by an opportunity to spend time in another country – due to a desire to learn about other cultures or people, or to experience

something different from what is possible at home, for example, because of a difficult economic situation in the country (the latter was raised especially by those who work with Spanish volunteers, for example). The third strong profile that came through from interviews was the one of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, who may not have the (skills) or confidence to go abroad alone but see EVS as a more supported opportunity to do so. The potential impact of EVS is likely to be the highest on the last two groups of volunteers.

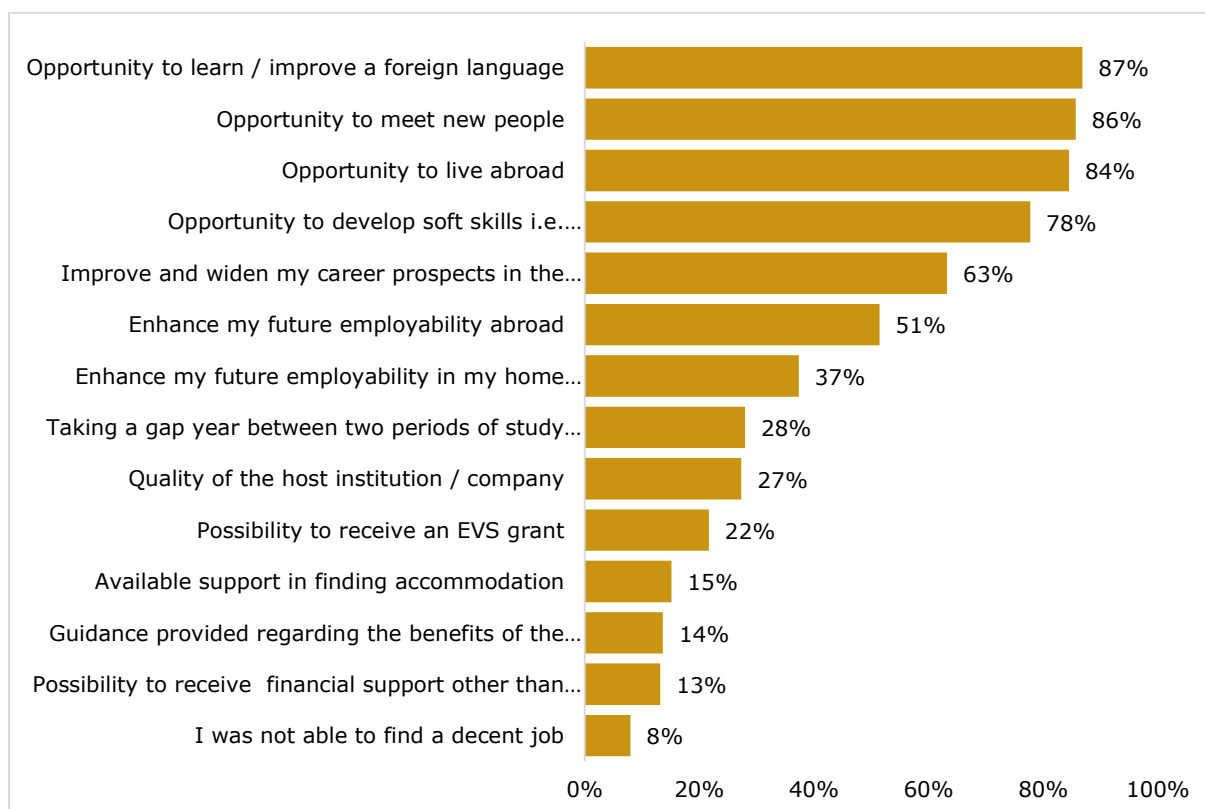
Figure 3-10 Type of project (multiple response)



Q: "Have you previously participated in similar projects?"(multiple response)
n = 4711

Three fifths (60%) of the respondents stated that they had not participated in a project similar to EVS. Given that 70% of the respondents, as shown above, stated that they had previous volunteering experience, this indicates that they consider most of these activities to be entirely different from EVS. Anecdotal evidence from the interviews and the Stakeholder Seminar suggest that the reason for this is that the majority of these volunteers were engaged in community activities with a much lower degree of organisation than EVS.

Figure 3-11 EVS volunteers' reasons for participating (multiple response)



Q: "Please select the reasons that were important or very important for your volunteering period abroad:"(multiple response)
n = 4077

Most EVS volunteers participated in EVS in order to learn or improve a language, meet new people and have the experience of living abroad. The opportunity to develop soft

skills was also cited by 78% of respondents, although aspects directly related to employability were cited by a smaller proportion of respondents: 63% stated that they went abroad to improve their career prospects, 51% to enhance employability abroad, and 37% to enhance their employability in their home country. Only 8% of participants cited difficulties in obtaining suitable employment elsewhere as an important factor.

Motivations for doing EVS

As already indicated, information collected through in-depth interviews with EVS volunteers and alumni suggest that there are three main reasons why young people carry out transnational volunteering through EVS:

- to do something 'good' and to make a difference to people's lives;
- to test their choice of professional orientation, or to have a 'break' between studies and the start of employment; or
- to escape a precarious situation, be it (long-term) unemployment or unsatisfactory work.

These findings also indicate that EVS serves different purposes for different volunteers, depending on their age and situation. Volunteers aged under 20 tend to see EVS as an opportunity to 'take a break' after completing their school studies and to test out a vocational orientation before engaging in further or higher education. For EVS participants aged 20–25, EVS is an opportunity to gain work-relevant experience after their studies and to confirm their choice of career or profession.

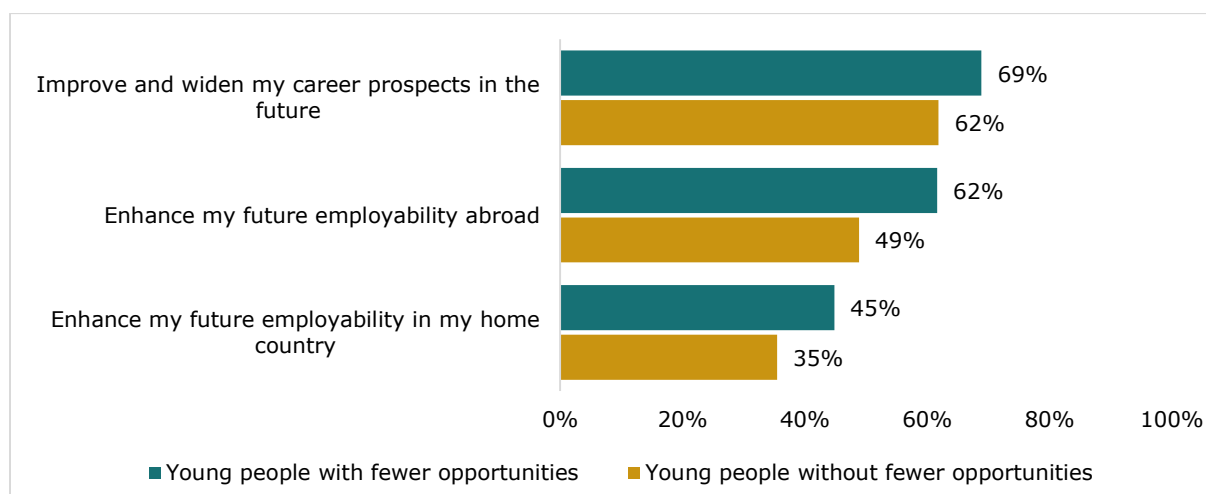
While this is also true of volunteers above the age of 26, they tend to use EVS as a means of mitigating difficulties encountered in integrating the labour market. For these young adults, volunteering abroad is a possible 'alternative' to a fruitless or interminable search for employment, or in some cases, to a situation of precarious and/or unsatisfactory work. In particular, for early leavers from school or university studies, EVS offers a good opportunity to identify new outlooks and a sense of direction in their lives and careers. Some of the EVS volunteers interviewed admitted that they were initially interested in taking part in the Erasmus programme, but that due to their financial situation they had to consider alternative ways of going abroad, with EVS representing a more feasible option for mobility.

'EVS provided an excellent opportunity to take a year off after her high school graduation in order to travel and grow as a person. I also wanted to learn to be more independent by living on my own. I really saw EVS as an opportunity to take a towards adulthood'
German EVS volunteer, 2017

'I was unemployed and I felt that I needed a change in my life' **Italian EVS volunteer, 2016**

In general, the distribution of individual sources of motivation to participate in EVS was almost the same for all subgroups such as volunteers with an academic vs. non-academic family background or male vs. female volunteers. The only exception was young people with fewer opportunities who differed from the more privileged in their motives in three aspects. Significantly more young people with fewer opportunities stated that they engaged in EVS in order to improve and widen their career prospects (+7%) and enhance their future employability abroad (+13%) or in their home country (+10%). Thus, they perceived EVS as a career enhancement tool more than other participants.

Figure 3-12 Differences between young people with and without fewer opportunities in terms of reasons for participating in EVS (multiple response)



Q: "Please select the reasons that were important or very important for your volunteering period abroad:" (multiple response)
n = 4053

Just over a quarter (27%) of the EVS volunteers stated that they were encouraged by a youth worker to take part in EVS. Youth workers thus have a limited but discernible effect on EVS participation.

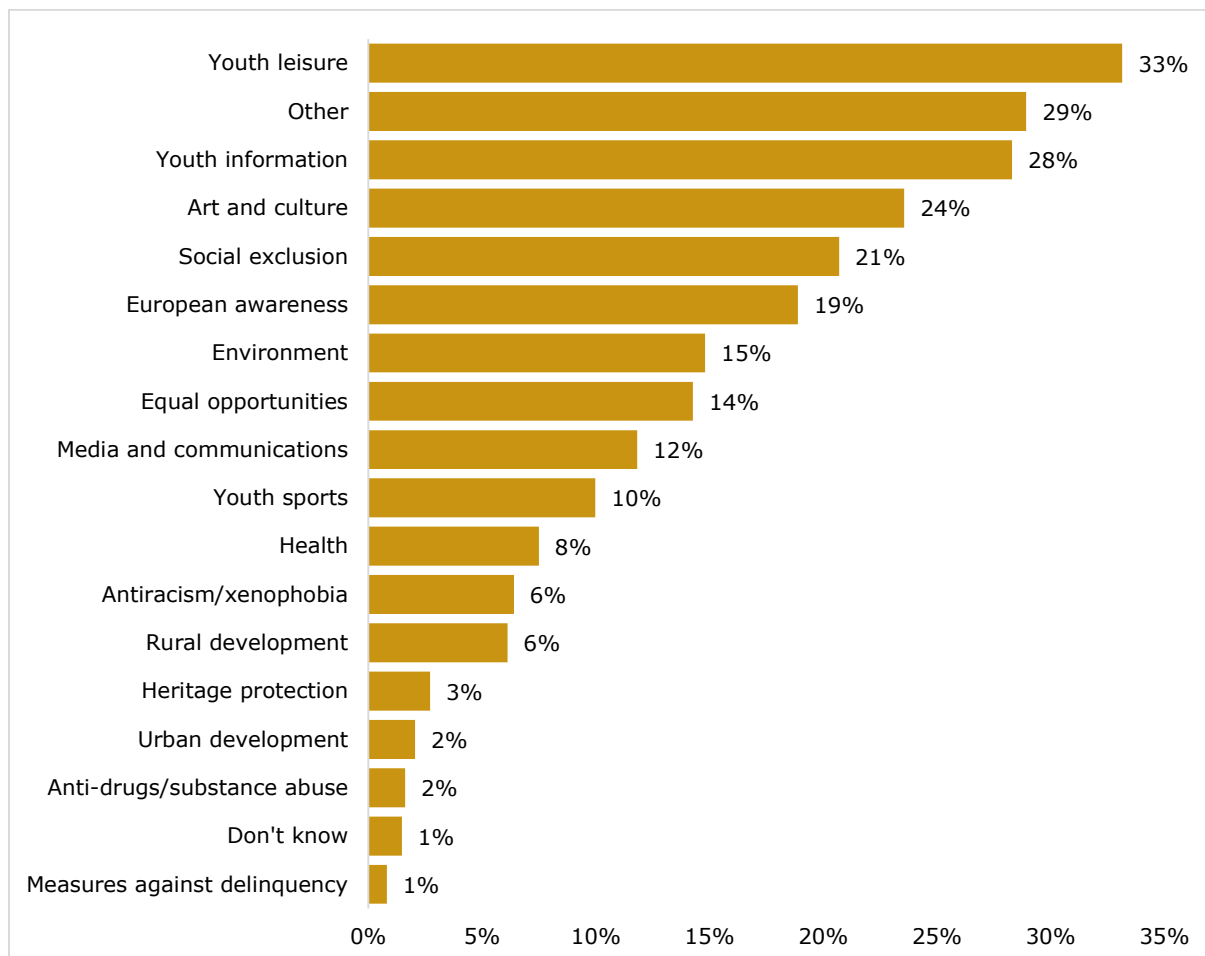
The case studies suggest that young people who are already actively involved in the youth sector are more likely to apply to take part in EVS than youths who are not involved in this sector. Indeed the most frequent route into EVS is through direct contact with former EVS volunteers, either by having friends who participated in EVS, by having heard talks given by former EVS volunteers or by being involved in a youth NGO. By listening to 'first-hand' positive experiences of EVS from friends or acquaintances, young people are encouraged to take part too, and are thus motivated to apply for EVS.

Other volunteers learn about EVS from the NGOs with whom they had previously volunteered in their home country, which either hosted EVS volunteers or were in contact with other NGOs active in EVS. Interviews indicated that few volunteers or alumni joined EVS after conducting their own research on the Internet or by being guided into EVS by youth workers and PES counsellors, although the latter route seemed to be more common in some countries, such as Finland and France, than in others.

'I heard about EVS while working for this NGO where I met two Spanish volunteers doing EVS in Slovakia. I was motivated by their positive experience' **Slovak EVS volunteer, 2016**

'I knew about many different exchange programmes but I had heard about EVS from a girl who had volunteered in Spain through EVS because she came to talk about her experience in my school. It made me so interested in the EVS that for me it became my first option' **Latvian EVS volunteer, 2017**

Figure 3-13 Areas of activity among EVS volunteers (multiple response)

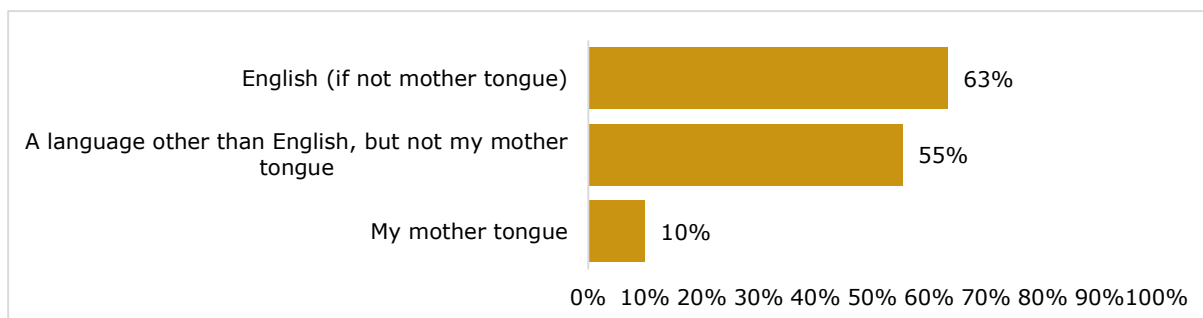


Q: "Which are the main themes of your EVS project? (you can choose up to 3 main themes)" (multiple response)
n = 4896

EVS volunteers engaged in activities covering a wide range of topics. The most frequent fields were youth leisure and youth information, followed by art and culture, social exclusion and European awareness. On the other hand, some topics remained underrepresented among the activities, such as heritage protection, urban development, drugs abuse or measures against delinquency. This might indicate either that these areas are less attractive to volunteers or that only a few receiving organisations offer positions in these fields.

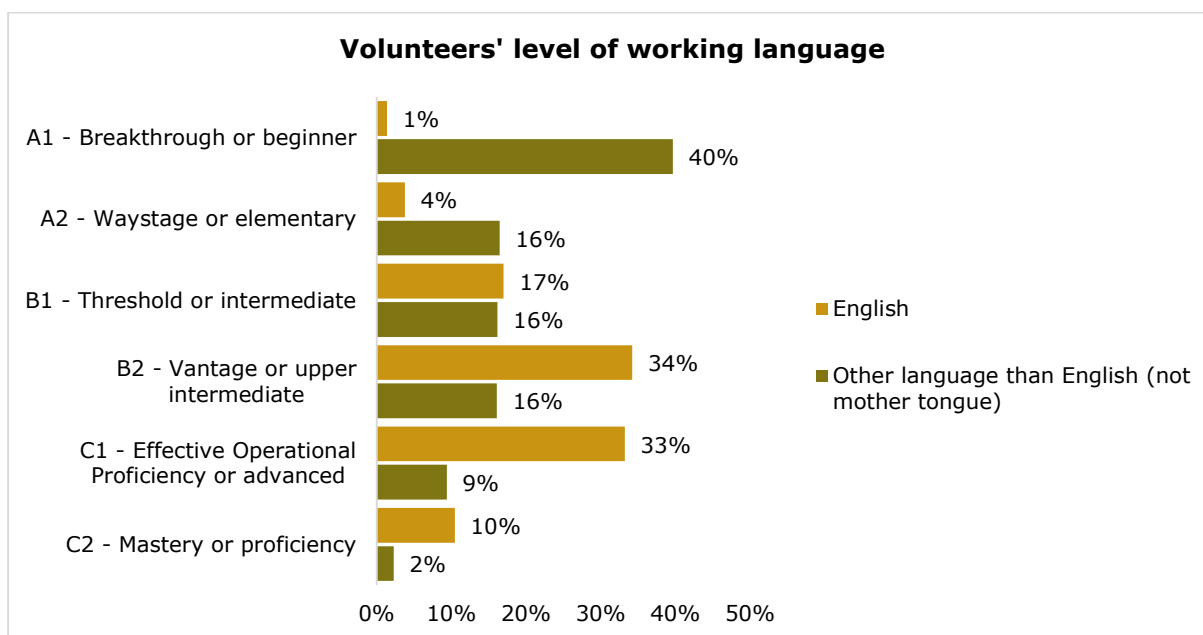
Figure 3-14 Language skills of EVS volunteers and relevance to volunteering

Language of work during volunteering (multiple response)



Q: "What is going to be the language(s) of work in your host institution?" (multiple response)
n = 4826

Language skill level



Q: "At which level are you able to speak the language of work according to the European Framework?"
n = 2607 (Other language)
n = 2974 (English)

Approximately 30% of the EVS volunteers participated in projects with more than one working language. Most of the participants have a good command of English: nearly half of them (44%) have C1- or C2-level language skills, and the other half (51%) have B1 or B2 level. On the other hand, the majority of those volunteering in a different foreign language had a rather poor command of that language: 56% had only A1 or A2 level,

which is insufficient for independent work, and only 12% assessed themselves as having C1 or C2 level⁵⁷.

This might indicate that languages other than English usually play more of a supportive role in the activity, e.g. in communication with clients such as young people or socially disadvantaged persons, while most of the EVS volunteer's actual work seems to be conducted in English. Nevertheless, over half of the volunteers (55%) stated that a language other than English was their language of work abroad. Taken together, this evidence indicates that language training in host-country languages (either pre-departure or during the mobility stay) might produce substantial benefits in terms of integrating volunteers into the local community.

⁵⁷ In fact, the reported level of language command after the stay was on average higher than before departure, indicating that language learning occurs while abroad. This effect is discussed further in the respective impact chapter.

3.2 EVS alumni

This part describes the specific characteristics of EVS alumni and when possible, those are compared with the characteristics of current volunteers.

3.2.1 General characteristics

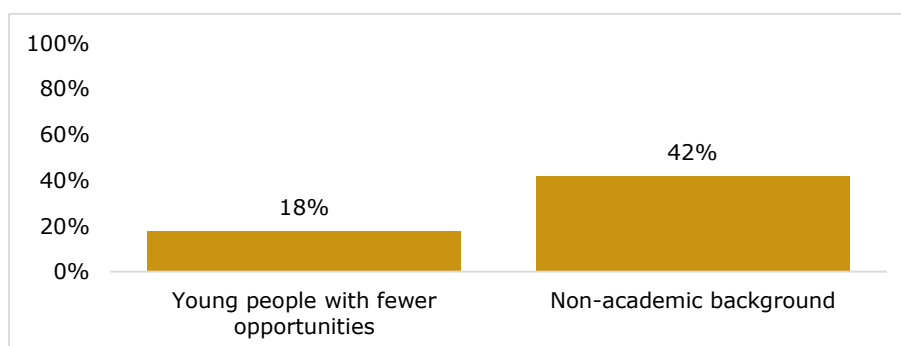
Figure 3-15 Gender distribution of EVS alumni



The majority of EVS alumni who took part in the survey were women (73%). As already shown in the previous section, the survey findings suggests that the current EVS population is more balanced in terms of gender than the alumni, with male volunteers constituting nearly two fifths of all current volunteers.

Around three fifths (58%) of respondents have an academic family background, while 42% came from a non-academic family background. In other words, EVS alumni are in the majority of cases from a background with more opportunities and usually more experience with stays abroad, similarly to Erasmus students and students in general. Furthermore, only 18% of the responding alumni considered themselves to be at a disadvantage compared to others at the time of the EVS experience. In other words, one sixth of the respondents can be identified as young people with fewer opportunities, according to the Erasmus+ programme guidelines definition. Thus, the sample of EVS alumni was in this respect very comparable with the sample of EVS volunteers.

Figure 3-16 Share of young people with fewer opportunities and a non-academic family background among EVS alumni



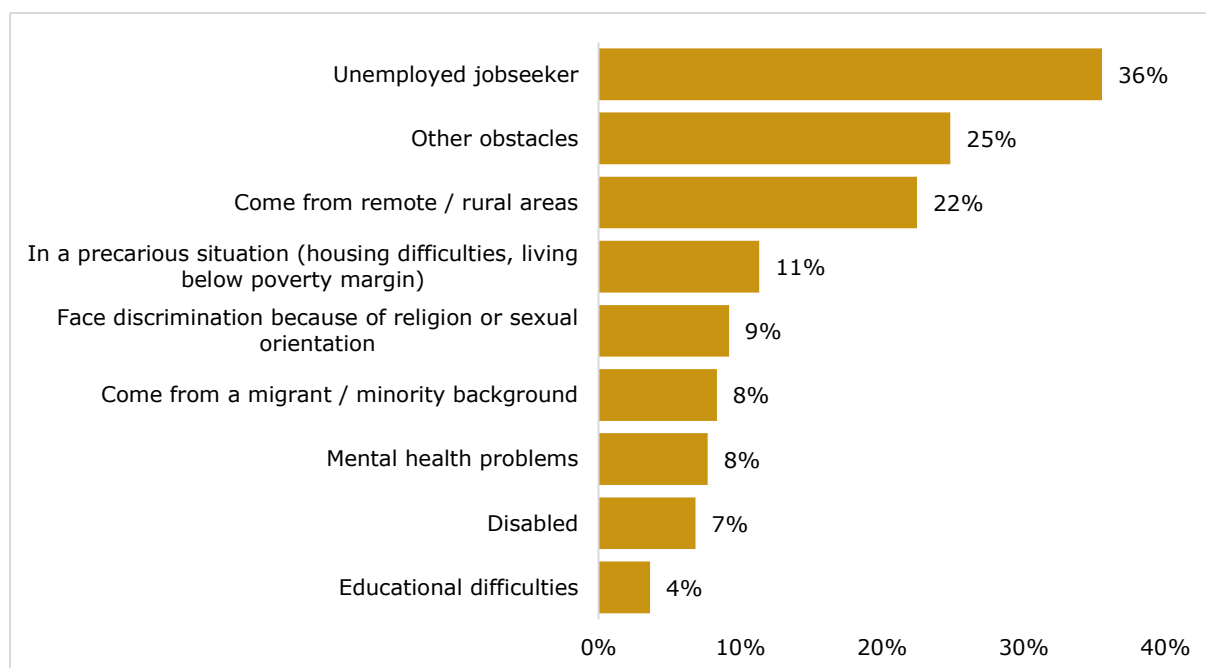
Q: "Do you consider yourself to be at a disadvantage compared to other young people of your age at the time of your EVS participation?"
Answer "Yes"

Q: "Did your parents (father and/or mother) attend a higher education institution?"
Answer "No"
n = 2656

Of the young people with fewer opportunities, 36% stated that before participating in EVS they had been unemployed jobseekers, while 22% originally came from rural or remote areas. Around one tenth (11%) considered themselves to be in a precarious

situation, such as facing housing difficulties or even living below the poverty threshold when they participated in EVS. Comparison with current EVS volunteers reveals that the share of volunteers from rural or remote areas has decreased over time (22% among alumni compared to 18% among current volunteers), while the share of unemployed participants has remained stable.

Figure 3-17 Ranking of types of fewer opportunities among EVS alumni (multiple response)



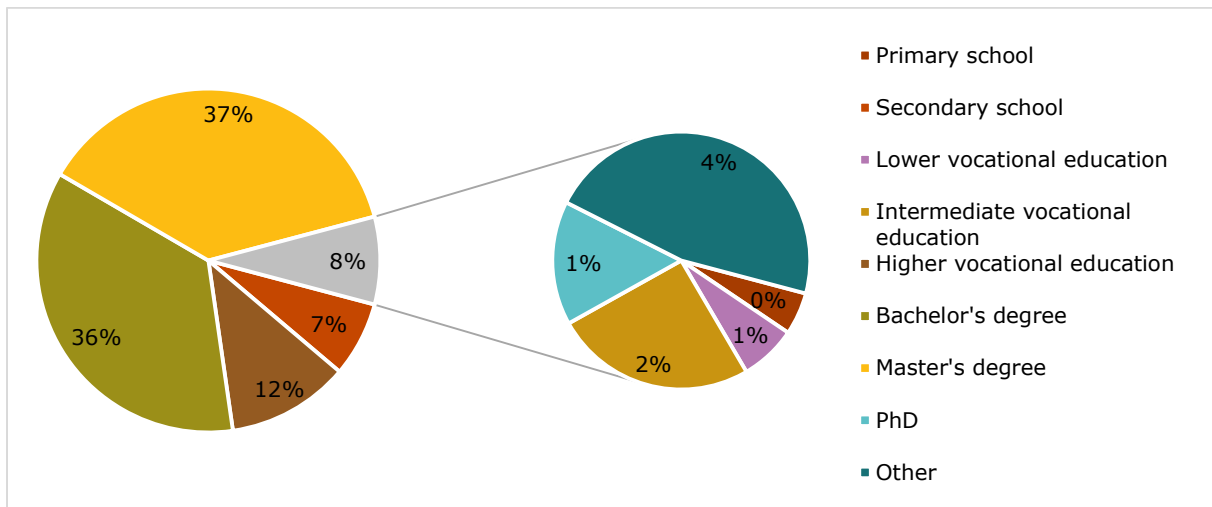
Q: "Do you consider yourself to be at a disadvantage compared to other young people of your age at the time of your EVS participation?" (multiple response)
n = 2656

Out of those alumni who stated that they were unemployed prior to taking part in EVS, 75% of those previously unemployed were later employed in some kind of occupation, while 25% stated that they were once again or still unemployed at the time of the survey.. The majority were working, with 52% in employment and another 7% being self-employed, while 10% were pursuing studies or professional training.

Table 3-2 Active jobseekers before EVS and their occupation at the time of the survey, EVS alumni

Employment	Self-employment / entrepreneur	Unemployment (not employed and seeking employment)	Further study	Professional training	Family care	Other
52%	7%	25%	5%	5%	1%	4%

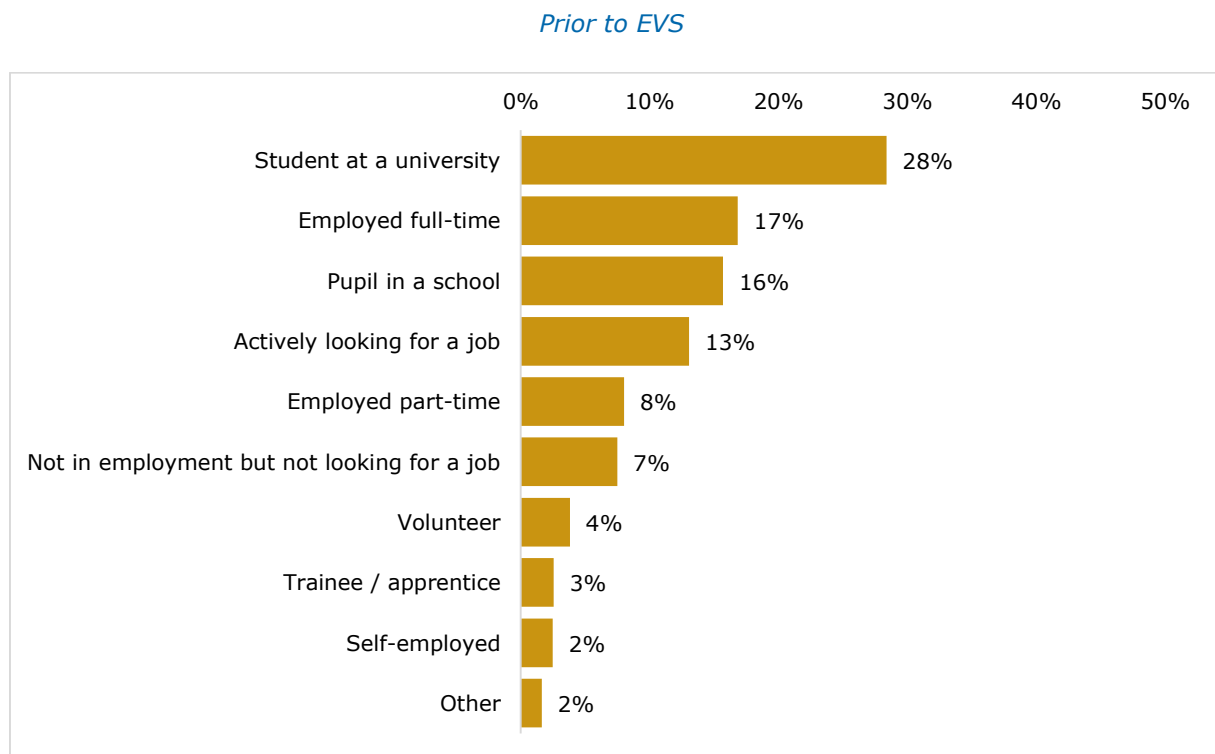
Figure 3-18 Education level of EVS alumni during survey



Q: "What is your highest level of education attained?"
n = 2731

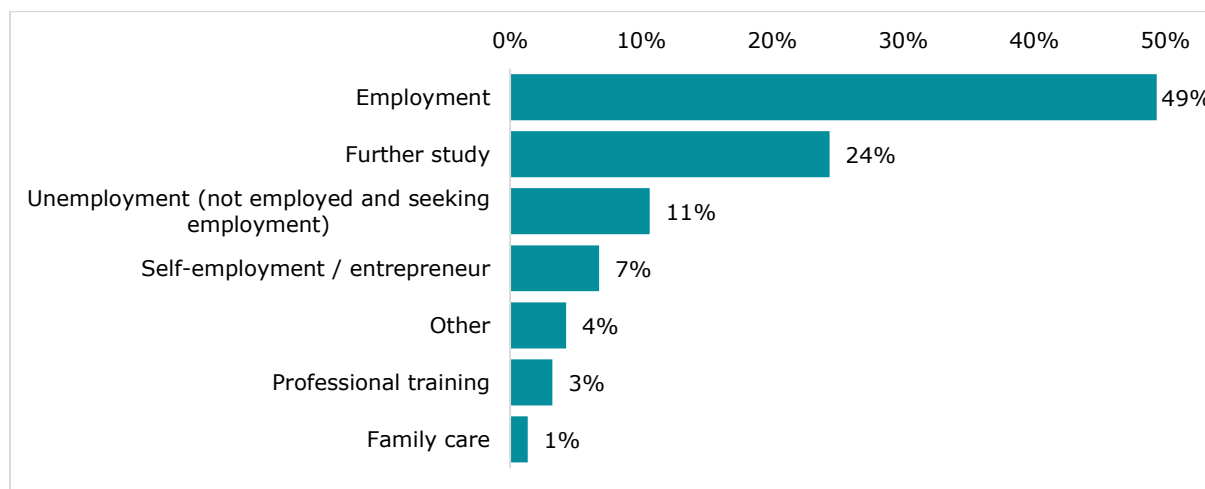
At the time of the survey, the vast majority of EVS alumni held a higher education degree (74%). 14% stated that they held some kind of vocational degree and very few to none had only mid- to lower-level education. This also indicates that EVS alumni have an interest in advancing their education, which ultimately also means that they have better career opportunities than others.

Figure 3-19 Occupation of EVS alumni before their EVS experience and at the time of the survey



Q: "What was your occupational status before taking part in the EVS project?"
n = 2695

At the time of the survey



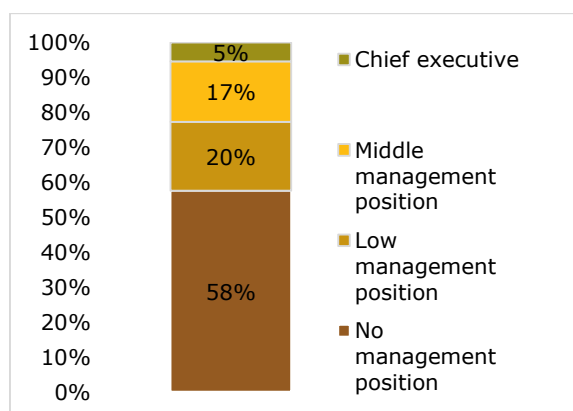
Q: "What is your current employment status?"
n = 2018

Prior to participation in EVS, 28% of alumni were university students and 16% were secondary school pupils, which is almost the same as for current participants (see above). Moreover, many EVS alumni were obviously in a phase of transition when considering EVS, be that unemployment, actively looking for employment, other volunteering activities or traineeships. At the time of the survey, 56% of the EVS alumni were in employment or self-employed, although a quarter also stated that they were occupied with further studies.

The conclusion that can thus be drawn is that EVS participants are in general well-educated people, indeed they even tended to continue their education after their participation in the programme. This corroborates the abovementioned profile of EVS volunteers as rather successful young people from increasingly educated backgrounds. Nevertheless, 11% were unemployed at the time of the survey.

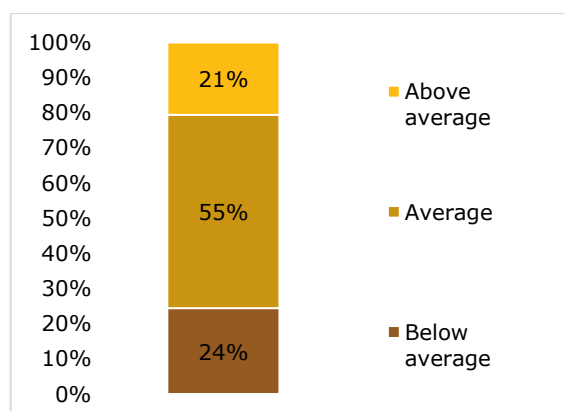
Figure 3-20 Current job position of EVS alumni

Current job position



Q: "What is your current job position?"
n = 1113

Salary



Q: "Please assess your current salary in relative terms, compared to other professionals in your field with the same level of education."

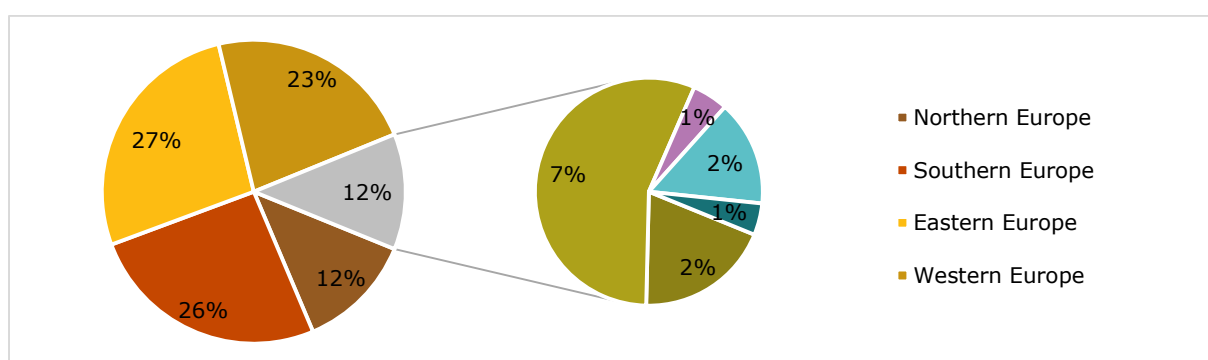
n = 1130

EVS alumni have been successful in reaching positions of responsibility. Out of those who were employed at the time of the survey, 42% held managerial positions. However, the majority (55%) stated that they were earning only average salaries. These aspects were further analysed in the respective chapter on the impact of EVS on the employability of participants (see Chapter 4).

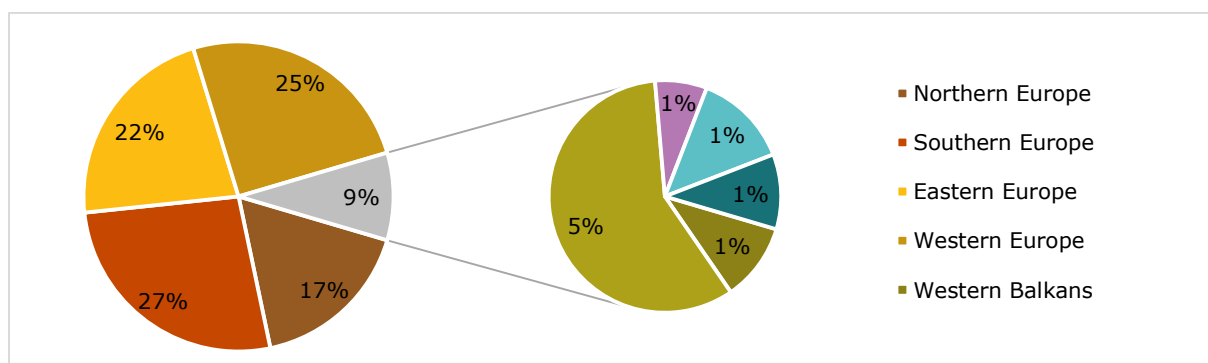
3.2.2 EVS-related characteristics

Figure 3-21 Host and home regions of EVS alumni

Home regions

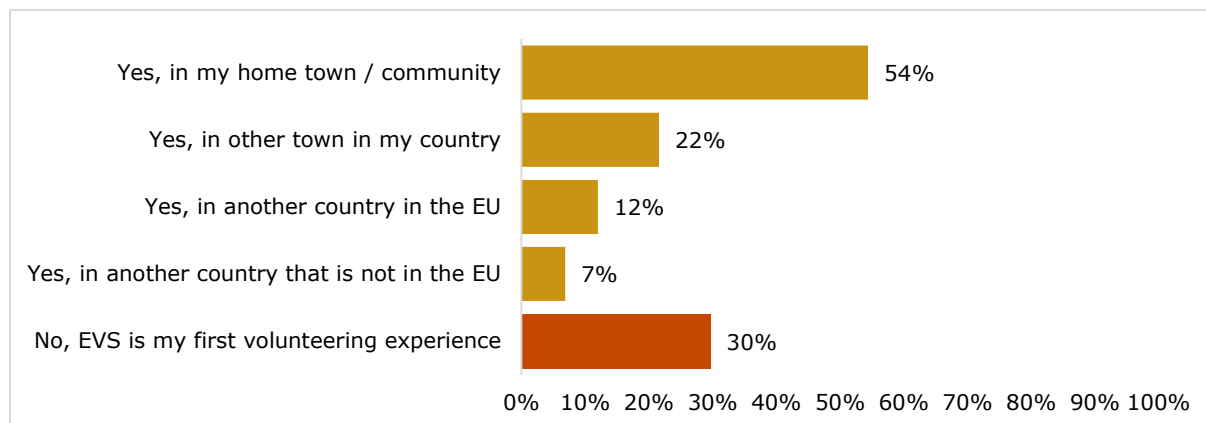


Host regions



Almost nine tenths (88%) of EVS alumni respondents come from the programme countries, with all regions being substantially represented. Among non-EU regions, the Eastern Partnership Countries were the most represented, both as sending and receiving countries. In contrast to other exchange programmes, as well as in contrast to the current volunteers, as shown above, there seems to be a balance among EVS alumni in terms of host and home regions. In this respect, there are only slight variations: Northern Europe is slightly more represented as a host rather than a home region, while Eastern Europe features slightly more prominently as a home rather than a host region. Among the other regions, there is also a relative balance in terms of hosting and sending participants.

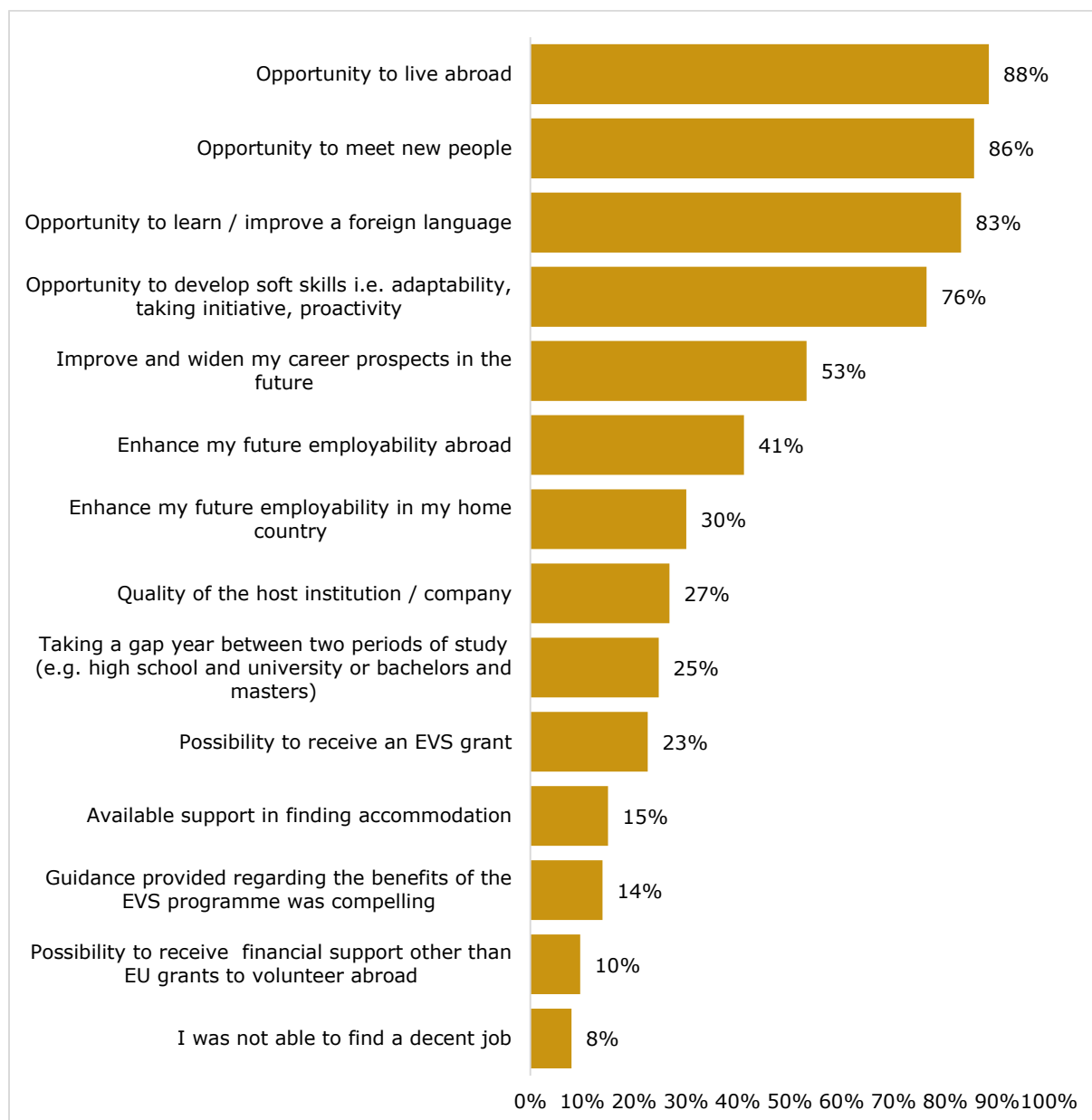
Figure 3-22 Previous volunteering experience of EVS alumni (multiple response)



Q: "Have you volunteered before?" (multiple response)
n = 2660

Again, the EVS programme was usually not the first volunteering experience among EVS alumni. Almost three quarters (70%) of all EVS alumni stated that they had already had another volunteering experience, and often more than one (for this reason, the percentages in the graph do not add up to 100%). The majority (54%) had this volunteering experience in their hometown, but 12% stated that they had previous volunteering experience in another EU country, and 7% outside the EU. Only 30% stated that they had no other volunteering experience before participating in EVS. This is important when considering later impact: as in most cases EVS is not participants' first volunteering experience, the level of impact is likely to be less than if it were. In addition, 33% of alumni respondents stated that they had been abroad before EVS as part of their studies or to complete an internship. Therefore, most of the participants already had either experience of a long-term stay or volunteering experience abroad before participating in EVS. Thus, for only a few alumni was EVS the first activity of this kind. These findings are therefore also in line with the findings on current volunteers.

Figure 3-23 Reasons for participating among EVS alumni (multiple response)



Q: "Please select the reasons that were important or very important for your volunteering period abroad:" (multiple response)
n = 2148

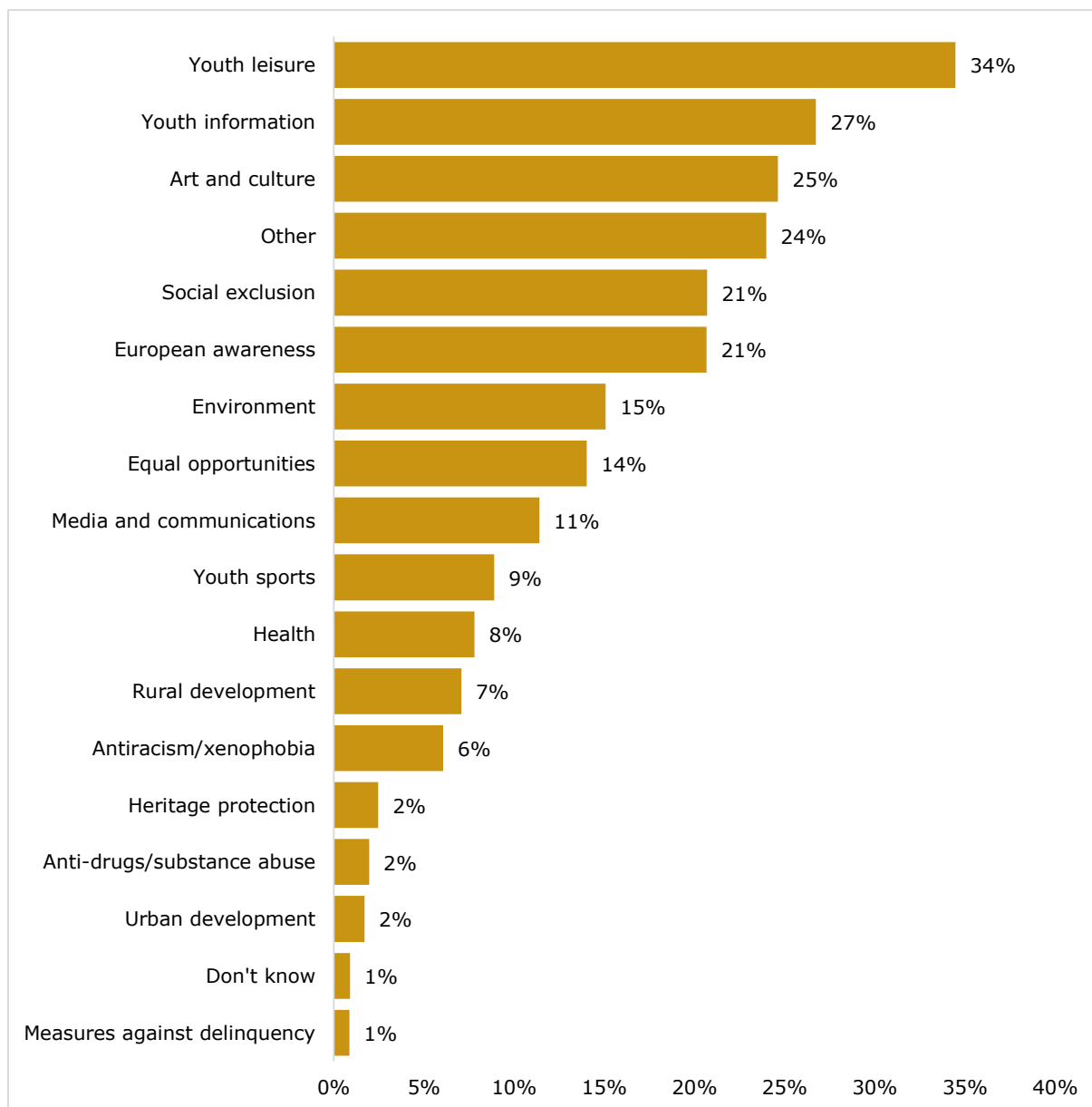
For most EVS alumni, the main reasons to engage in the programme related to the opportunity to live abroad, meet new people, learn languages or improve soft skills.

As in the case of current volunteers, it is rather surprising that only half of the respondents considered career aspects and employability abroad an important factor. It seems clear that, for the majority, EVS was considered more of a social than a career-oriented activity.

Moreover, in line with the results for current volunteers, 28% of the EVS alumni stated that a youth worker guided them towards participating. This reason was cited most often in the case of participants from partner countries (42%). Significantly more male (35%)

than female (25%) participants reported that they had been influenced by a social worker in this respect.

Figure 3-24 Areas of activity among EVS alumni (multiple response)



Q: "Which are the main themes of your EVS project? (you can choose up to 3 main themes)" (multiple response)
n = 2752

The areas in which the EVS alumni were involved during their EVS volunteering ranged widely, with youth leisure, youth information, and art and culture being the most prominent identified areas. Social exclusion, environment and European awareness were also frequently cited areas of activity. The distribution was very similar to that among current volunteers, which indicates that the content of EVS volunteering projects has remained rather stable over time.

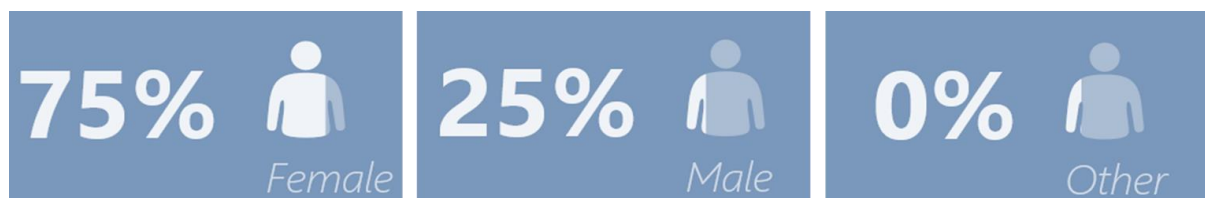
3.3 Non-EVS volunteers

This part provides information on the characteristics of non-mobile volunteers. The group is composed of individuals who are active volunteers within their home countries but have no international volunteering experience. For the analysis, non-EVS volunteers act as a control group in relation to EVS volunteers.

3.3.1 General characteristics

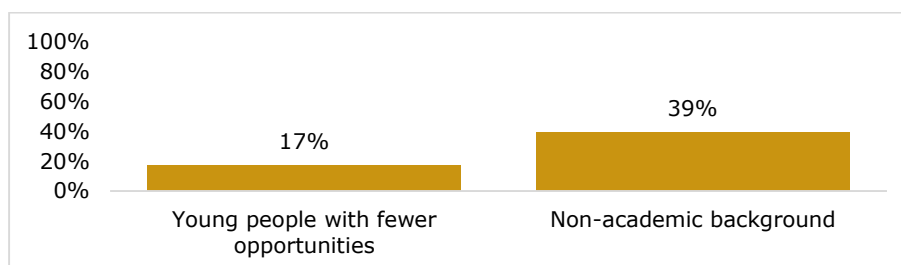
Non-EVS volunteers in the sample are predominantly female (75%). This share is even higher than among EVS participants and alumni (see above), indicating that the higher proportion of women among EVS participants is in fact representative of the general volunteering population, from which the majority of EVS participants were recruited (i.e. with prior experience in volunteering).

Figure 3-25 Gender distribution of non-EVS volunteers



Almost one fifth (17%) of respondents considered themselves disadvantaged compared to other young people. Furthermore, the parents of 39% of the non-EVS volunteers did not hold a university degree. Both of these numbers were slightly lower than for EVS participants, suggesting that EVS may be less socially selective than other volunteering activities. In other words, this evidence suggests that EVS is succeeding to involve (marginally) more young people from disadvantaged backgrounds than national or local volunteering schemes. This is partially supported by the case study findings, which showed that EVS has managed to involve young people with fewer opportunities - especially through short-term inclusion projects - who had no prior experience or indeed interest in volunteering. This is particularly the case when EVS organisations or authorities working with disadvantaged youth are aware and recognise the value that EVS can bring for young people with fewer opportunities.

Figure 3-26 Share of young people with fewer opportunities and a non-academic family background among non-EVS volunteers



Q: "Do you consider yourself to be at a disadvantage compared to other young people of your age at the time of your EVS participation?"

Answer "Yes"

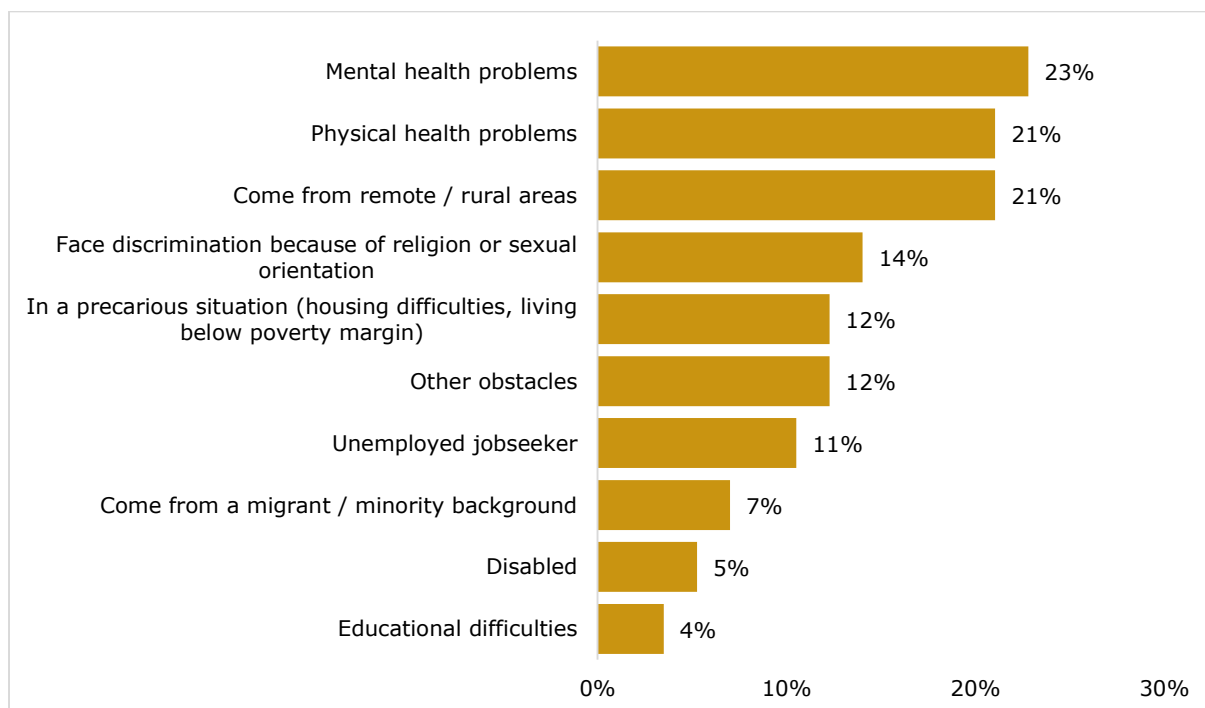
Q: "Did your parents (father and/or mother) attend a higher education institution?"

Answer "No"

n = 329

Among the young people with fewer opportunities, mental and physical health problems were the most common source of disadvantage (23% and 21% respectively), together with living in a remote or rural area (21%). In contrast to EVS, relatively few non-EVS volunteers were unemployed jobseekers (11% of the group with fewer opportunities).

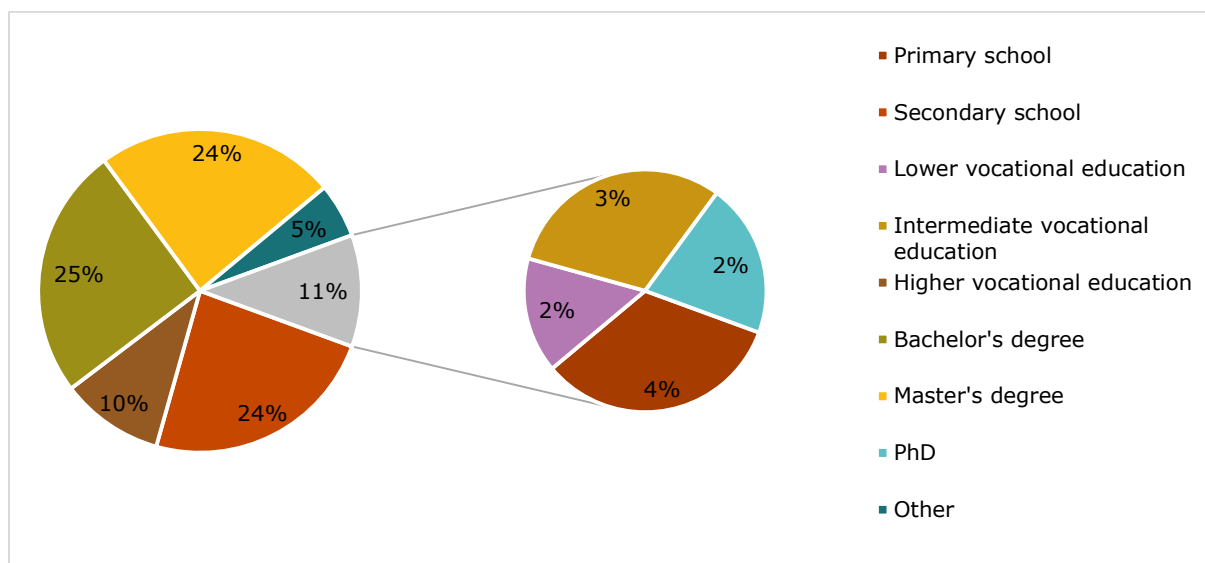
Figure 3-27 Ranking of types of fewer opportunities among non-EVS volunteers (multiple response)



Q: "Do you consider yourself to be at a disadvantage compared to other young people of your age?" (multiple response)
n = 329

Just over half (52%) of non-EVS volunteers held a degree (half of them held a bachelor's degree, and the other half a master's). However, 30% were university students and 25% upper-secondary school pupils at the time of the survey. It is therefore likely that a significant proportion of them will go on to obtain a university degree later in life.

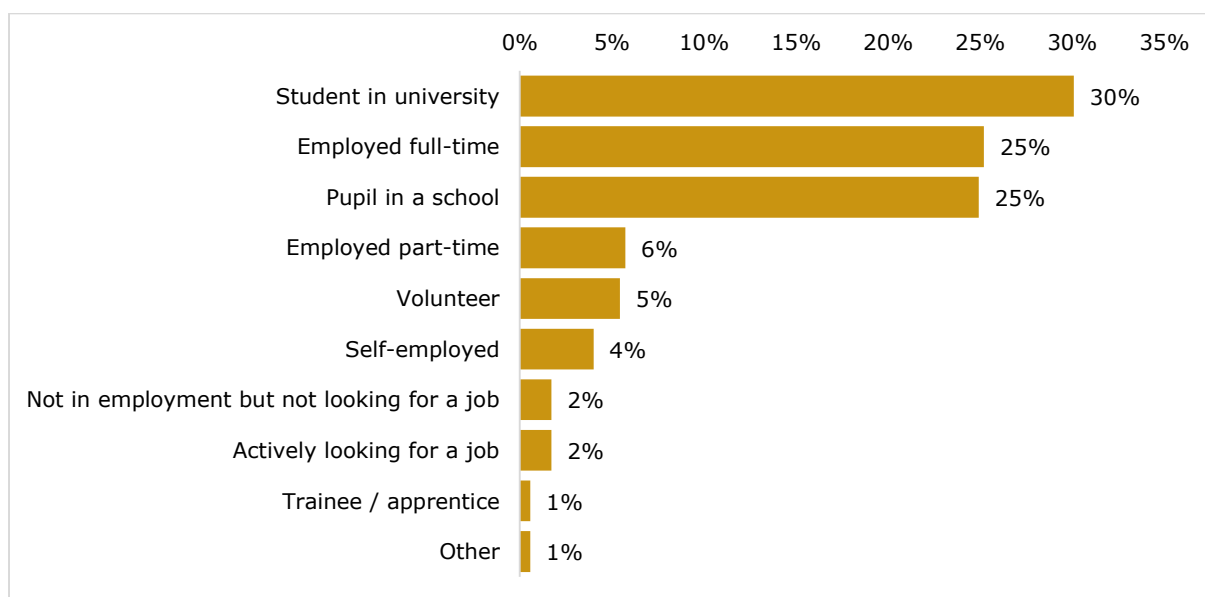
Figure 3-28 Education level of non-EVS volunteers



Q: "What is your highest level of education attained?"
n = 349

Besides students and school pupils, who together formed the majority of non-EVS volunteers, 25% of such volunteers were employed full-time, while 6% were employed part-time and 4% were self-employed. A small proportion (5%) considered volunteering to be their main occupation, while 1% were completing a traineeship or an apprenticeship. In terms of the issue of fewer opportunities, only 2% were unemployed and seeking a job, while an additional 2% were unemployed but not actively seeking employment.

Figure 3-29 Occupation of non-EVS volunteers



Q: "What is your current occupational status?"
n = 349

3.3.2 Volunteering-related characteristics

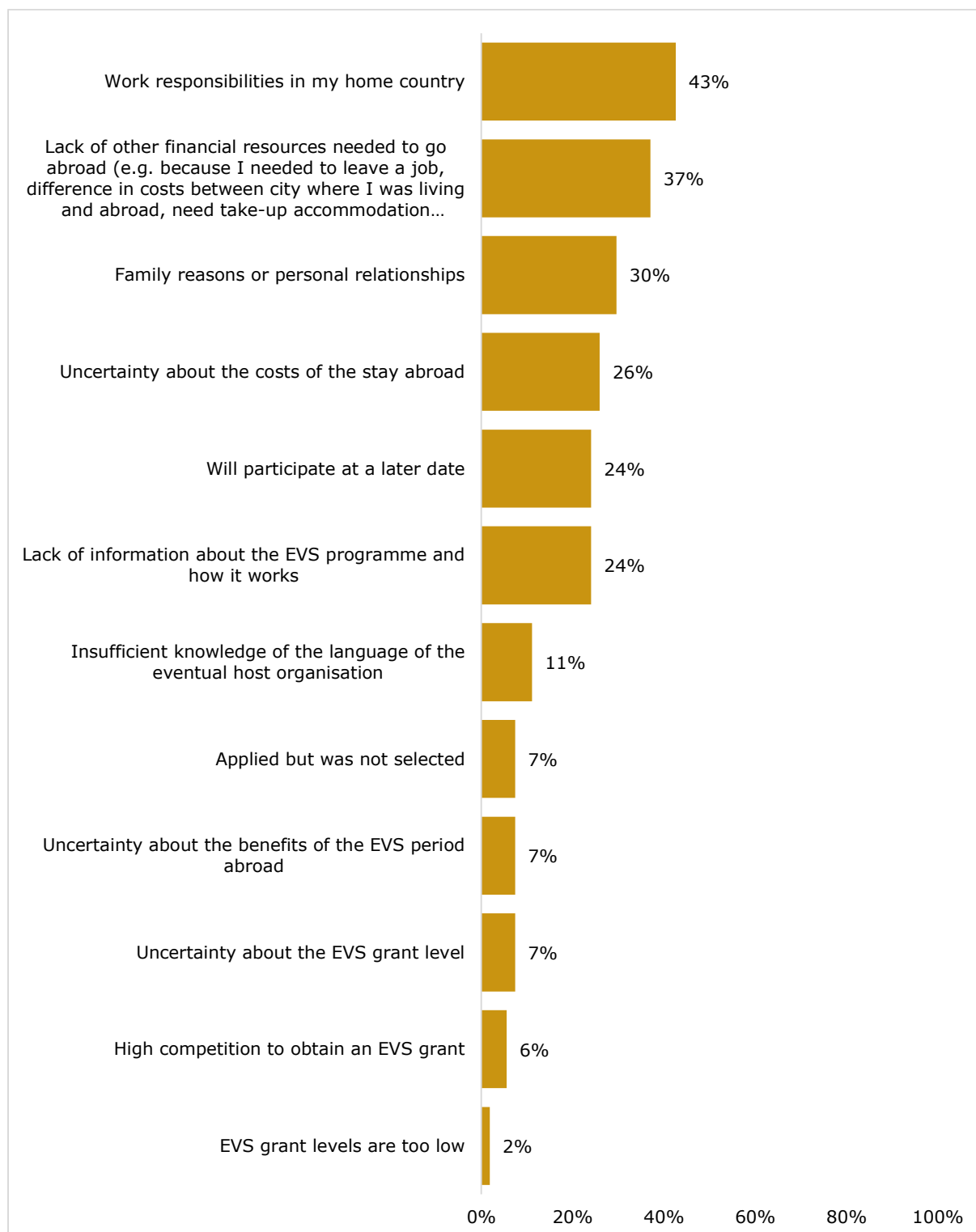
One fifth (20%) of the non-EVS volunteers had been abroad for a study period or an internship, for example, as part of the Erasmus programme. This is a relatively high proportion, taking into account the fact that a substantial number of these volunteers were upper-secondary pupils and that, of the remainder, not all attended university. Nevertheless, the figure was significantly lower compared to the 34% among current EVS volunteers. This finding might indicate that volunteers with previous international mobility experience are more likely to take part in EVS at a later stage.

Almost a quarter (23%) of the non-EVS volunteers stated that they were aware of the existence of EVS and an additional 29% stated that they had 'heard a little' about it. Thus, less than half of non-EVS volunteers were completely unaware about the existence of EVS.

Just over two fifths (43%) of non-EVS volunteers stated that they did not participate in EVS due to work responsibilities, while 30% cited family reasons and personal relationships. For many, financial aspects were also an issue, with the highest number of respondents citing difficulties in covering the expenses incurred (37%), followed by uncertainty about the actual costs (26%), uncertainty about the grant level (7%), and high competition for grants (6%). Almost a quarter (24%) felt insufficiently informed about EVS and 7% were not sure whether the benefits arising from participation were worth the time and costs.

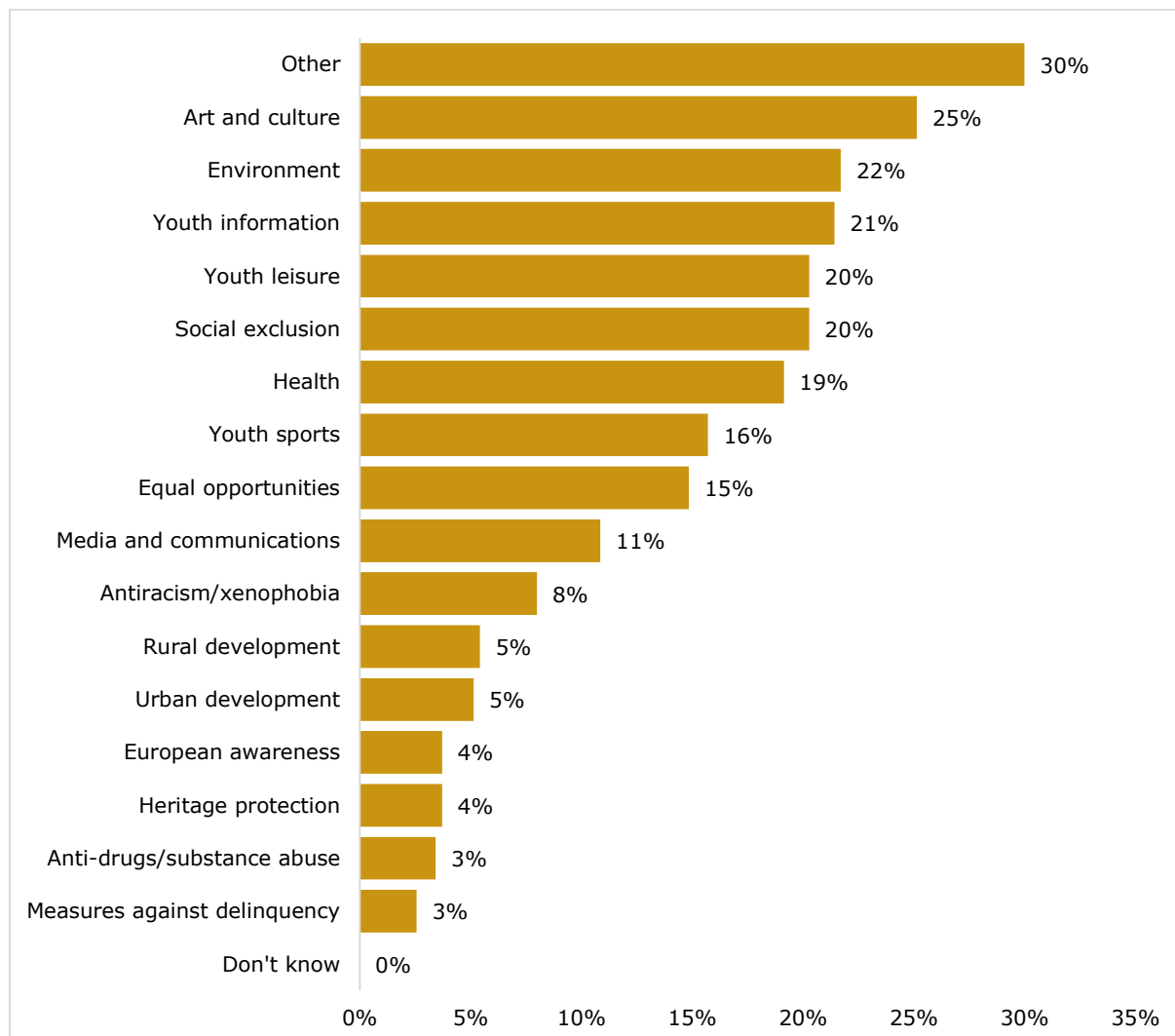
Nevertheless, 24% stated that they planned to apply to participate in EVS in the future, while 7% had applied before but had not been selected. There was therefore substantial interest in EVS among the non-EVS volunteers.

Figure 3-30 Non-EVS volunteers' reasons for not participating in EVS (multiple response)



Q: "Please select the reasons that were important or very important for your volunteering period abroad:" (multiple response)
n = 54

Figure 3-31 Areas of volunteering activity among non-EVS volunteers (multiple response)



Q: "Which are the main themes of your EVS project? (you can choose up to 3 main themes)" (multiple response)
n = 350

The areas in which non-EVS volunteers work most frequently fell into the categories of art and culture, environment, youth information, youth leisure and social exclusion. This distribution generally corresponds to the areas of volunteering activity among EVS volunteers, with the exception of environment and particularly health, which are substantially more represented among non-EVS volunteers than among EVS participants. Therefore, the attention of new groups of young people might be increased by providing more EVS projects in above-mentioned areas.

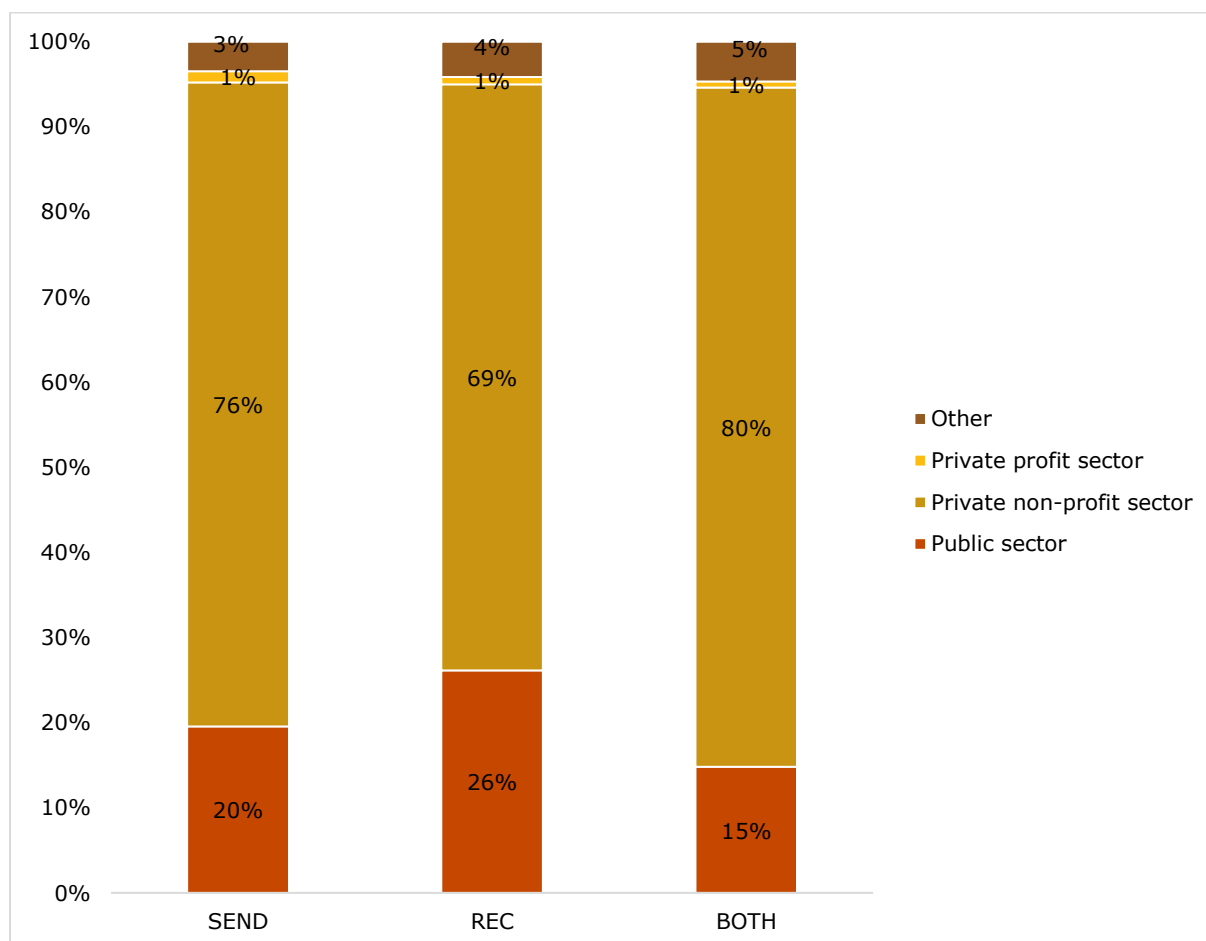
3.4 EVS organisations

This part offers an overview of the organisations that take part in the EVS by sending and hosting EVS volunteers.

3.4.1 General characteristics

The majority of the participating EVS organisations (76% on average) belong to the private non-profit sector, while 26% of the receiving organisations are public organisations. Private for-profit organisations represented only a very small proportion of the sample (1%). This profile of EVS organisations was mirrored by the profile of EVS organisations that took part in the case studies: the great majority of the interviewed organisations were private non-profit organisations (NGO), with only two of the participating organisations being local authorities. The two local authority focussed case studies that were completed demonstrated the positive role that local authorities can play in engaging more grassroots-level NGOs in EVS projects by acting as coordinators and facilitators of local EVS projects.

Figure 3-32 Type of sector of participating organisation

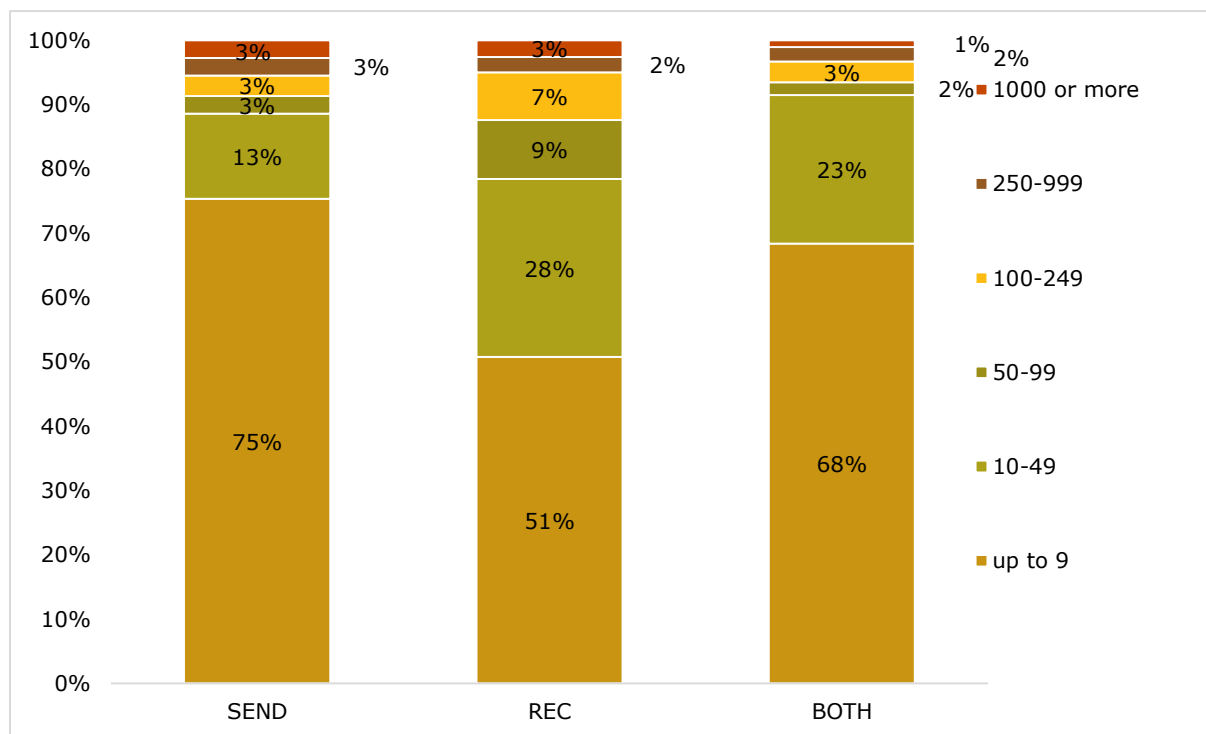


Q: "Your organisation has been participating in the EVS as:"
n = 1644

Most of the participating EVS organisations are small in terms of number of employees. Overall, 64% of the organisations have fewer than 10 employees, while 87% have fewer than 50 employees. Organisations that only receive but do not send volunteers are on

average larger, with 51% having up to 9 employees, and 28% having 50 or more employees.

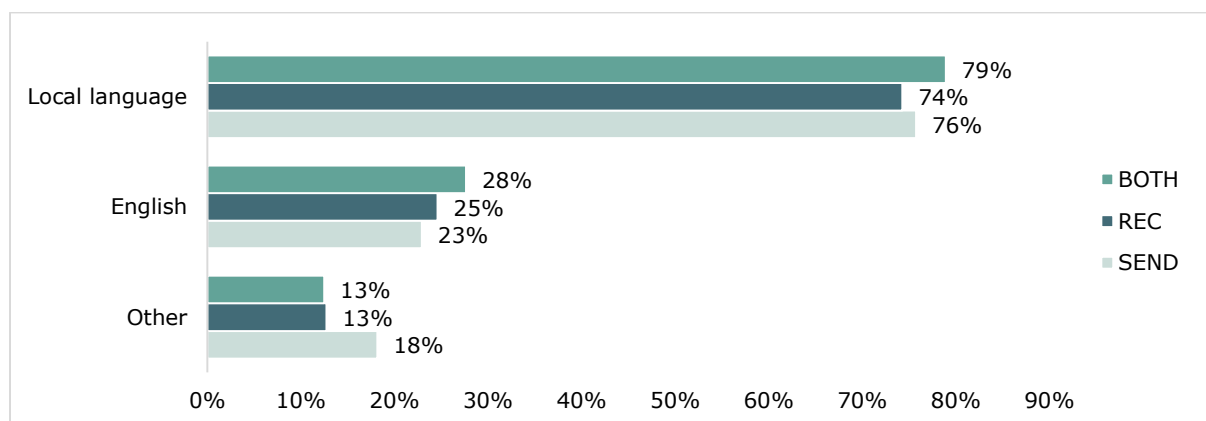
Figure 3-33 Number of employees of participating organisations



Q: "How many persons are employed at your organisation?"
n = 1522

The participating EVS organisations operate predominantly in local languages, with approximately a quarter of the responding organisations stating that English is their primary working language. This is one of the challenges for EVS in that unless the volunteers speak the host country language, it can take a long time to learn the basics of the language, which can hinder the integration of EVS volunteers in the daily life of the host country, organisation, its beneficiaries and other locals. However, at the same time, this is also a benefit in that many participants have an opportunity to learn languages that they may not have considered learning without EVS.

Figure 3-34 Working language of participating organisations

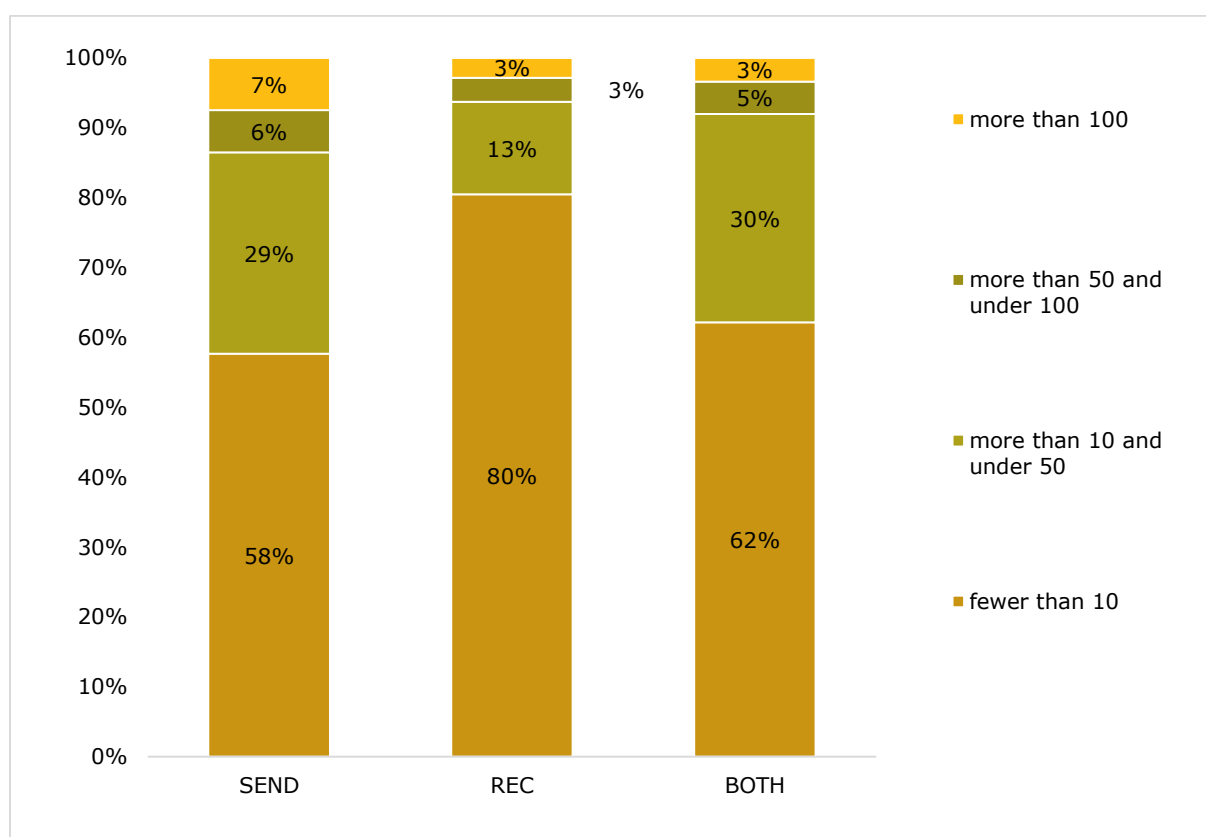


Q: "Which is the official language(s) of your enterprise?"
n = 1816

3.4.2 EVS-related characteristics

Most of the EVS organisations host only a small number of volunteers, which is not surprising considering that these are organisations with a small number of employees, as stated above. Two thirds of all EVS organisations have fewer than 10 volunteers annually, while 92% have fewer than 50. Organisations with more than 10 volunteers are rare, in particular among receiving-only organisations. This contrasts with the generally larger size of such organisations, as shown in the figure below.

Figure 3-35 Average number of volunteers per year at participating organisations



Q: "What is the average number of volunteers you have per year at your institution (head count, independent of duration)?"
n = 1538

There is no clear relationship between the size of the host organisation (in terms of number of employees) and the number of hosted EVS volunteers. Most of the organisations have both fewer than 10 employees and fewer than 10 volunteers annually. However, some very small organisations host large numbers of volunteers, while some very large organisations host very few volunteers. Large organisations hosting a high number of volunteers are the least represented category.

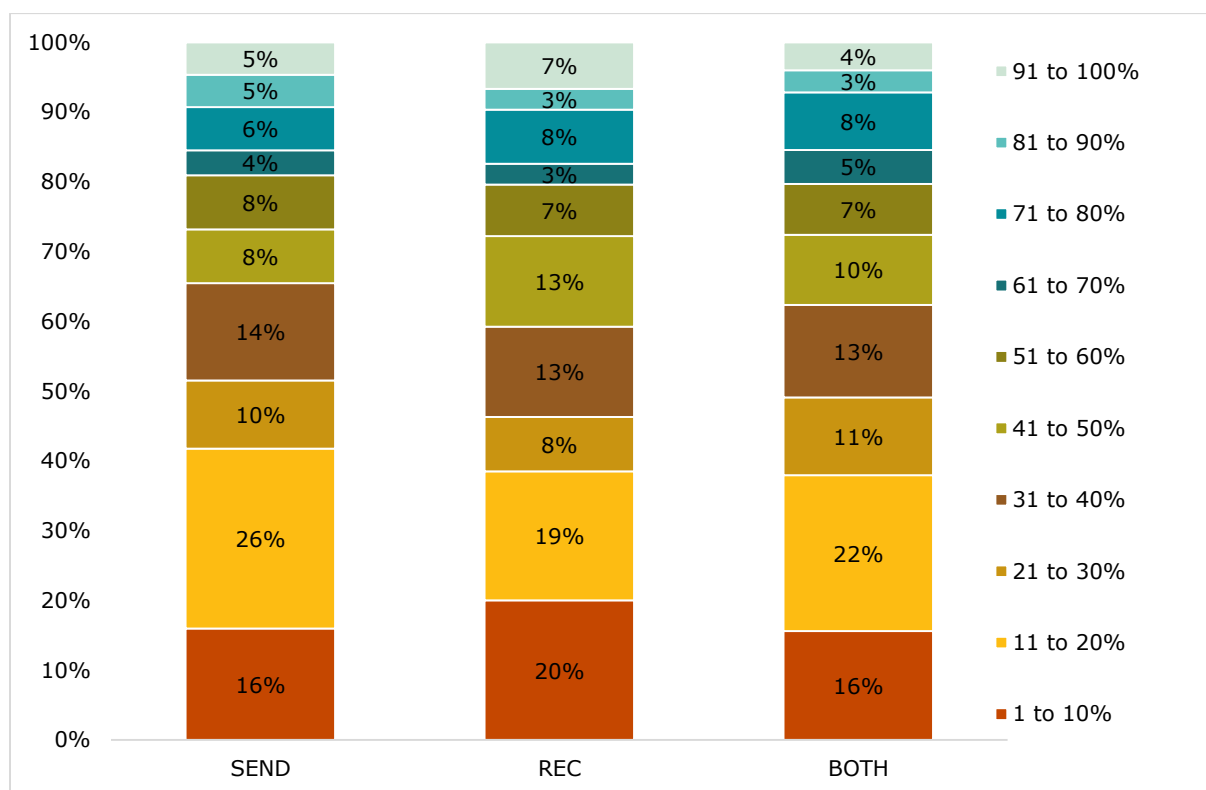
The case study evidence suggests that there is a link between the length of organisations' involvement in the EVS and the number of volunteers they send / receive: the longer the organisations are involved in EVS, the more likely they are to increase the

number of volunteers they host and receive and act as coordinators of EVS projects. This is directly linked to the expertise and confidence of the staff to deal with the administrative and practical details related to the scheme.

Table 3-3 Number of employees and number of volunteers at participating organisations

		How many persons are employed at your organisation?						Total
		up to 9	10–49	50–99	100–249	250–999	1 000 or more	
On average, how many volunteers does your institution host per year (head count, independent of duration)?	fewer than 10	634	225	55	51	21	16	1 002
	more than 10 but under 50	252	80	2	12	8	7	361
	more than 50 but under 100	43	16	3	2	4	0	68
	more than 100	29	18	3	2	2	1	55
Total		958	339	63	67	35	24	1 486

Figure 3-36 Percentage of volunteers recruited among young people with fewer opportunities



Q: "What percentage of your volunteers were recruited among persons with fewer opportunities?"
n = 1189

In general, the EVS organisations stated that a substantial proportion of their volunteers are young people with fewer opportunities. Only 17% stated that fewer than 10% of their volunteers came from disadvantaged backgrounds, while in 5% of the organisations over 90% of the volunteers were considered to be young people with fewer opportunities. **On average, across the EVS organisations who responded to the survey, 41% of the volunteers recruited were young people with fewer opportunities, which is double the number of volunteers in our sample who self-reported as disadvantaged.** This is not a surprising result considering that young people themselves are not keen to classify themselves as such even if people in their host organisation see them in such light especially when the volunteers come from countries that are less well off than their own country.

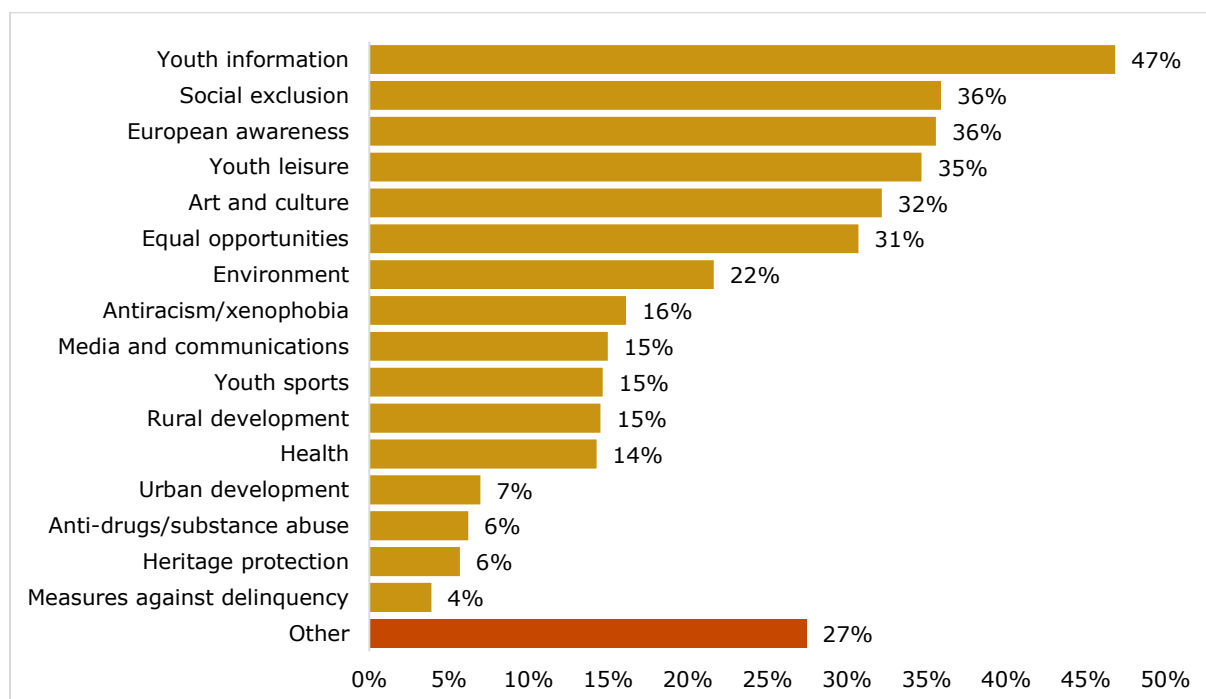
Motivations of organisations to get involved in EVS

The examples of EVS organisations presented in the case studies indicate that there are three main motivations and routes for organisations to join EVS:

- organisations founded or influenced by former EVS volunteers who, upon their return from EVS, were motivated to make a change and to build a system for promoting mobility opportunities for young people in their community – these organisations are active at local level and have EVS at the core of their mission;
- organisations that came into contact with EVS organisations and were keen to get involved in EVS, but which initially lacked capacity, so they were at first local partners of EVS and over time, with the help of the coordinating EVS organisation, obtained EVS accreditation – these are typically grassroots organisations; and
- organisations with a long history or a specialised profile that are keen to add an international dimension to their activities or to develop new partnerships with countries with which they do not typically cooperate – these organisations usually learn about EVS from their institutional partners or from the relevant National Agency in their country.

The majority of responding organisations stated that they work in the field of youth information and youth leisure, which reflects the main areas of EVS volunteering activity cited by EVS volunteers and alumni. In addition, the other major areas of volunteering work among current and past EVS volunteers, such as social exclusion, art and culture or European awareness, were strongly represented among the organisations.

Figure 3-37 Main focus of work of participating organisations



Q: "Please indicate the main focus of work of your organisation:" (multiple response)
n = 1562

3.5 Obstacles to participation

This section examines obstacles to EVS participation for young people and organisations.

3.5.1 Obstacles to EVS participation for individuals

The literature and interviews conducted revealed five key obstacles that hinder the participation of young people in EVS. Primarily, these concern the lack of awareness, family influence, lack of support during the application process and the EVS placement itself (especially for young people with disabilities and other complex needs), and regulatory and financial barriers (see figure below). These obstacles are discussed in more detail below, together with the solutions suggested by the interviewees.

However, the key finding is that the obstacles to participation are *experienced proportionally to a greater extent* (in terms of depth and breadth) by more vulnerable young people – i.e. those from less privileged backgrounds, those with less experience of formal and non-formal education and youth services, and those not involved with local youth clubs and other NGOs.

Table 3-4 Obstacles to EVS participation: Individual volunteers

BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION / INDIVIDUAL VOLUNTEER LEVEL	
EVS awareness	Lack of awareness among young people of EVS and opportunities it provides, especially among young people with fewer opportunities
Family influence	Lack of information about the value of volunteering among friends, parents and wider family of EVS and consequent influence on potential volunteers
Availability of support with the application process	The complex application process favours 'experienced' youth
Availability of supported EVS opportunities	Shortage of appropriately supported opportunities for young people with disabilities and other complex needs
Regulatory and financial barriers	Barriers to participation due to financial restrictions (due to high costs, in some cases travel and living costs are not fully covered by the grants), VISA restrictions and rules on reimbursable expenses

Lack of EVS awareness

Not all young people benefit from the same level of awareness and information about the

'Outside the NGO world, young people don't know about the possibilities to volunteer abroad. Or they have heard about it, but they think it is only for the "privileged". They don't know it is open to anyone'
EVS volunteer in Portugal, 2016

'I think EVS ambassadors are a good idea. They could promote EVS in their home countries upon their return, especially among the less privileged'
EVS volunteer in Hungary, 2017

different personal and professional development opportunities available to them, especially when the opportunities are transnational. This also applies to EVS. The level of awareness about such opportunities tends to go hand in hand with the general level of engagement in both formal and non-formal education, training and youth sector activities, and

socioeconomic background⁵⁸. For example, young people with higher levels of education tend to be more aware of potential benefits of participation in mobility projects and are more open to seeking information about such opportunities⁵⁹. On the other hand, the lack of information about transnational mobility opportunities and awareness of their benefits among young people from more disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds have been documented by numerous studies⁶⁰. There is also evidence that EU youth projects such as EVS do not enjoy the same level of awareness in remote or sparsely populated areas as in areas with more active youth sectors⁶¹.

These findings were confirmed by the interviews carried out as part of the case studies. Many of the interviewees felt that the information is not reaching large sections of the youth cohort, especially young people from disadvantaged backgrounds – the young people who could potentially benefit the most from EVS. Some felt that EVS does not have ‘sufficient presence’ outside the third sector, which unduly limits awareness of the programme to young people involved in active NGOs and those who have been ‘lucky enough’ to receive such information from mediators, such as the career advisor in their school/college, local youth NGO or their PES advisor. Respondents also cited the possibility that young people, especially those from less affluent backgrounds, assume that transnational programmes such as EVS are available only to the privileged few.

Interviewees put forward an array of different proposals on how to raise awareness and engage more young people with fewer opportunities in EVS. These included:

- appointment of EVS ambassadors (i.e. EVS alumni) tasked with spreading awareness about EVS through word of mouth, social media and talks at schools, universities and careers fairs, etc.;
- empowerment and training of frontline youth workers and those working in formal services, such as the PES, to raise awareness of opportunities and increase young people’s confidence to take up international mobility opportunities such as EVS – financial incentives for youth workers to support young people with fewer opportunities have also proven effective;
- creation of new and use of existing peer-to-peer networks and other structures to raise awareness, for example, creation of an EVS alumni network at EU level (similarly to the Erasmus Student Network) and advertising EVS through the Euro-Peers network launched by NAs in Austria and Germany;
- advertising EVS as a supported mobility programme by investing more on the training of EVS mentors and pre- and post-mobility training for volunteers;
- introduction of quotas for the involvement of young people with fewer opportunities – in other words, specifying that a certain proportion of the volunteers sent and received should fall into the category of ‘young people with fewer opportunities’;
- use of ‘youth-friendly’ tools and channels for raising awareness, such as social media, TV and radio channels favoured by young people (i.e. MTV), testimonials on YouTube, EVS stories on Euronews, EVS ambassadors among celebrities, etc.; and
- preparation of jargon-free guides/information materials on EVS, featuring testimonials from EVS alumni.

⁵⁸ For example, ECORYS et al. (2014). EVS Competences and Employability, report from symposium 2014; Souto-Otero, 2016; INJEP, 2016; RAY (2012). Exploring Youth in Action – Effects and outcomes of the Youth in Action programme from the perspective of project participants and project leaders.

⁵⁹ Souto-Otero, 2016.

⁶⁰ INJEP, 2016; RAY, 2012.

⁶¹ ECORYS, 2011.

Family influence

Friends, parents and the wider family play a major role in either supporting or hindering a young person's decision to apply for EVS. There is some evidence of negative perceptions of a value of volunteering programmes to the careers of young people, especially among those family and friends who have not been involved in volunteering. For example, one French EVS volunteer stated: 'I decided to apply against the will of my parents, which was not easy but I believe it was a good choice.'

Often such perceptions among parents are due to a lack of information about the benefits of EVS. Some parents regard EVS as purely a 'gap year', implying that they do not understand how it can support the young person's professional and personal development. Others do not feel comfortable at the thought of someone so young staying in a foreign country for a significant length of time.

Some interviewees highlighted the important role that established, well-known NGOs and public sector bodies as hosts of EVS volunteers can play in gaining parental support: a highly experienced organisation can appear a trustworthy host for their son/daughter. The involvement of public authorities in the 'marketing' of EVS can also have a similar effect, as does provision of information to parents about concrete projects and tasks that volunteers undertake during their time on the programme.

Lack of support with the application process

Preparing an EVS application can be a new and daunting experience. Aspiring EVS volunteers may not have prior experience of writing applications or covering letters in English and they may struggle to familiarise themselves with the terms and concepts and to identify appropriate opportunities abroad. Recent studies have found that young people are usually keen to apply for transnational mobility projects but that a demanding

'Young people in such poor neighbourhoods ... cannot imagine going on abroad on a programme like EVS. It is very difficult for them to prepare the application, to write a CV and motivation letter in English. Even with support is available to them, they can still get worried and overwhelmed by the fear of failure and psychological pressure. They need extra support... They need help with the application, they need motivation... But what is needed the most is to actively reach out to them and explain the benefits of going abroad with EVS'
EVS volunteer, France, 2016

application process and selection procedure can be off-putting to them⁶². This issue also arose in interviews.

Although Erasmus+ National Agencies provide advice to potential applicants, the selection process tends to favour applicants who have prior experience in civic engagement, as well as confidence and skills to prepare a competitive application, or skills relevant to the given project, thereby excluding the most vulnerable

applicants from the selection process⁶³. Many of those involved in EVS are keen to ensure EVS has a more equal representation of young people from different backgrounds, so as to ensure that the programme has a wider reach.

Shortage of supported placements

The shortage of mobility placements for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds is a significant barrier in terms of uptake of the EVS programme⁶⁴. This applies especially to young people with disabilities but also to young people with other complex needs (i.e. young people without family support and few financial resources) and demands (i.e. young mothers). An EVS project manager from Germany explained: 'Young people with

⁶² ECORYS, 2014; INJEP, 2016.

⁶³ INJEP, 2016; Bauchaud, 2011.

⁶⁴ ECORYS, 2014; ECORYS, 2011; IBF, 2014.

disabilities want to go abroad through EVS, but there are not enough EVS projects that are accessible to them.' She specified that it can take up to a year to organise a placement for a disabled volunteer and that, even then, only one short-term opportunity may be available, with no funding in place to employ a support worker. This was echoed by several other interviewees.

The main reason for the shortage of *supported EVS placements* suitable for this target group is indeed lack of (human and financial) resources to support young people with such needs. Organisations face higher costs when sending and receiving such volunteers, stemming from the need for continuous support before, during and after the mobility experience⁶⁵. For this reason, one of the interviewees noted that the 'selection process [of many EVS organisations] focuses on recruiting those who need less supervision'.

These trends in the selection process are accompanied by a growing tendency among some hosting organisations to issue increasingly advertisements for 'professional' volunteers. Some volunteer advertisements ask for specialists skills, such as knowledge of specific IT programmes or fluency in several languages. Interviewees felt that such conditions eliminate thousands of potential volunteers and favour well-educated young people.

The wish to make EVS more inclusive for young people with disabilities and other complex needs was raised by numerous interviewees. These interviewees would like to see EVS grow not only in terms of numbers but also in terms of the quality and range of volunteering placements available for young people from *all* backgrounds. To achieve this objective, according to interviewees, special methods of support need to be employed, coupled with appropriate resources and incentives and accountable monitoring procedures to ascertain the level of diversity.

Examples of good practice in providing supported placements

On the basis of case study evidence, EVS organisations with an inclusive ethos seek to secure EVS placements for those who require additional support by:

- dedicating additional time and resources in this area,
- identifying relevant placements in partner organisations, and
- limiting the number of volunteers so as to secure relevant support for those who need it.

A representative of one French EVS organisation explained its approach to work with disadvantaged youth: *'We work on concrete projects that are meaningful to the respective young person. "One volunteer, one project" means that the young person needs to fully engage in the EVS project. There are paid staff to accompany volunteers and help them during the process.'*

A volunteer from Latvia who completed her EVS in Finland at the Youth Service of the Lahti Municipality identified the mentoring arrangement of her host organisation as an example of good practice of a supportive arrangement. She explained that the organisation makes sure that each volunteer has a 'leader' who guides them in their work and then a 'mentor' who is different from the work leader and not as directly involved in the day-to-day activities of the volunteer. In this way, volunteers always have someone to talk to, even in difficult situations.

A volunteer who did her EVS in Serbia explained called for a more regular monitoring of EVS organisations, which host volunteers. She felt that the lack of monitoring and evaluation of organisations' activities with volunteers is surprising and means that there is no on-going feedback to the organisations about what they are doing well

⁶⁵ INJEP, 2016.

and where they could improve on.

A Romanian EVS organisation, Team for Youth, organises pre-departure preparation for the volunteers in order to teach the volunteers to manage their expectations and to motivate them to perform to the best of their abilities. During their mobility, the sending organisation keeps in contact with the volunteers and monitors their situation. After their return home, the NGO offers them opportunities to stay involved, for example to become EVS mentors or local volunteers on existing projects in the community.

Regulatory and financial barriers

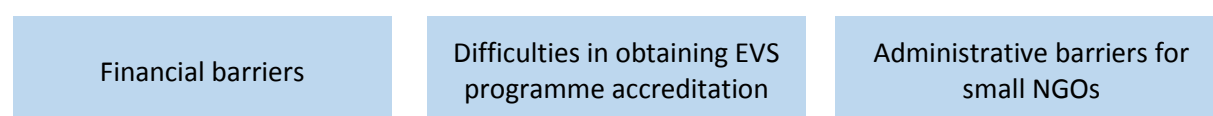
For third-country nationals volunteering within the EU as well as for EU citizens volunteering outside of the EU, difficulties encountered in obtaining visas remain a significant barrier. One interviewee who did her EVS in Turkey reported experiencing visa issues that resulted in her being required to pay a large sum of tax or else find herself forbidden from entering the country for five years. 'I would have liked to have additional support in dealing with my visa issues. No one could help me', said the ex-EVS volunteer. She recommends the establishment of a hotline that EVS volunteers could call for information in such urgent cases where the sending, receiving or coordinating organisations cannot help.

Financial constraints can hinder the ability of young people to participate in transnational mobility projects, in particular those with fewer opportunities⁶⁶. Interviewees raised the issue of the same allowance being paid to all volunteers in one country; those volunteering in capital cities, where living costs are higher, receive the same amount as those living in areas with a considerably lower cost base. Also, some interviewees reporting problems with the new 'distance calculator' for the reimbursement of travel expenses, leaving some volunteers out-of-pocket and having to pay some of the travel costs by themselves.

3.5.2 Obstacles to EVS participation for new organisations

A large proportion of the organisations participating in EVS and other EU youth programmes do so on a recurrent basis and have extensive prior experience of cooperation in transnational partnerships⁶⁷. This can be positive in terms of the quality of projects, but given the limited funding available and the intensified competition for grants, it can restrict access for new, first-time applicant organisations⁶⁸. This section considers the financial and accreditation-related obstacles to EVS participation experienced by potential new hosting, sending and/or coordinating organisations.

Figure 3-38 Obstacles to EVS participation to new organisations



Financial barriers

Financial and resource considerations are an important barrier for some organisations interested in participating in EVS. This problem has three dimensions.

⁶⁶ ECORYS, 2007; RAY, 2012.

⁶⁷ RAY, 2012; ECORYS, 2011.

⁶⁸ RAY, 2012.

The first concerns availability of funding for sending organisations. The interviews revealed that the lump sum fee system is perceived as insufficient in terms of enabling sending organisations to cover the costs associated with preparing volunteers for their placement. Sending organisations receive a small percentage of the total project grant, but this is not enough to cover all the administrative work related to preparation, follow-up and promotion. As a result, some interviewees reported that they and their partners were less interested in participating in future EVS projects as sending organisations. The need to strengthen the support for sending organisations to reach out to young people, support them with the application process, prepare them for mobility and provide follow-up after EVS was identified as a priority issue by many stakeholders.

One organisation interviewed revealed that it has to co-finance the cost of the staff member administering the system from funding for other projects. It would be able to send more individuals, especially young people with fewer opportunities, if the budget were increased or distributed differently. This is also seen as a barrier for new organisations interested in getting involved in sending EVS volunteers abroad
EVS organisation, Germany, 2016

The second financial barrier concerns small NGOs that host only one or a few volunteers. Such NGOs raised the issue of the flat rate system, which they see as being more beneficial for large organisations hosting many volunteers, which can pool resources to make cost savings (i.e. renting one house for all the volunteers to stay in).

Finally, as already discussed in the section above, the shortage of resources/incentives to identify, involve and then support volunteers with fewer opportunities is a barrier for many organisations, as they lack the appropriate resources to help such volunteers during the placement and/or to provide appropriate pre- and post-placement support. With reference to potential incentives, some interviewees warned of the dangers of organisations using such increased funding simply to benefit their own organisation. This raises an important point, namely that any potential incentive system must be accompanied by appropriate monitoring.

Difficulties in obtaining EVS programme accreditation

New organisations are now experiencing more difficulties than before in terms of being accredited and having their EVS project accepted under Erasmus+. Organisations with many years of experience in preparing EVS project applications have an upper hand, given the expertise acquired and available administrative resources. At the same time, active volunteers have the potential to make a big organisational impact in small, less organised organisations, meaning that it is important to ensure a wider pool of EVS organisations.

In Faro (Portugal), ECOS (Cooperativa de Educação, Cooperação e Desenvolvimento) works on an ongoing basis to expand the pool of small NGOs involved in EVS by acting as an umbrella, coordinating organisation. ECOS organises meetings with managers of small NGOs to familiarise them with EVS and to encourage them to first interact with EVS volunteers, then involve them in their own activities, and eventually apply for EVS accreditation.

Interviewees identified help from National Agencies to new applicant organisations as being key, but also recommended the provision of training for recently accredited EVS organisations, including training of volunteer mentors and training on the organisation of high quality EVS projects and experiences.

'The ADS Association in Faro, Portugal, was motivated from the start to get involved in EVS, but had no capacity to organise EVS projects on its own. Their partnership with ECOS made it possible to host volunteers as of 2012. Over time, ADS developed expertise and capacity through hosting EVS volunteers and, with the help of ECOS, managed to obtain accreditation for EVS and to develop its own EVS projects'
EVS case study, Faro – Portugal, 2016

Administrative barriers for small NGOs

Small NGOs generally perceive the administrative burden of filling out applications and complying with reporting obligations as too onerous, given the project budgets and human resources available. Others find the process lengthy and the language complex, especially for small grassroots organisations submitting their first application⁶⁹. Therefore, many local NGOs prefer to become involved through coordinating organisations, as this reduces the administrative burden.

⁶⁹ RAY, 2012.

4 Impact of EVS

4.1 Individual volunteers

Key findings: Individual impacts of EVS

1. **Almost all (96%) of the current EVS volunteers and 97% of the alumni agree that EVS is very beneficial for their personal development.** EVS gives volunteers the opportunity to learn about themselves and broaden their horizons - 96% of the EVS volunteers after return and 98% of the alumni state that they gained new insights about themselves and their abilities. EVS also has a strong impact on developing volunteers' autonomy and independence.
2. **EVS attracts participants with an already very high level of personality traits, which effectively limits the change that can be produced through the EVS stay abroad.** Although 87% of EVS volunteers feel that EVS had a positive impact on their personality development, such a positive change was not proven by the psychometric analysis.
3. **EVS has an impact on the volunteers' learning and competence development.** Three out of four respondents state that EVS helped them to improve their inter-personal and social competences. Volunteers gain most in the social and human skills, such as interpersonal communication or understanding of other cultures, but less so in technical skills.
4. **EVS fosters participants' social capital.** Almost all of the alumni (97%) have friends who live abroad, and 94% still keep in contact with friends they had met during the volunteering period.
5. **Almost all of the volunteers (86%) and of the alumni (97%) state that they improved their language skills, both in the local language and in English during EVS.** While most volunteers start learning the local language from zero, they usually become fluent by the end of their EVS. Equally strong is the impact on improving English.
6. More than **80% of EVS volunteers and EVS alumni think that EVS helped them to identify opportunities for their professional future, clarify what they want to do later in life, and prepare them for an international career path.** Almost all EVS organisations (91%) stated that EVS has a high or very high impact on the employability of volunteers. Moreover, 80% of EVS volunteers coming back from their EVS reported that they expect to have better job opportunities because of their EVS experience.
7. Three fifths (59%) of the EVS volunteers and 55% of the alumni feel that the **EVS experience helped them to find their first job**, and two out of three believe that it was **profitable for their career development**.
8. **EVS fosters entrepreneurial skills**, as **9% of the alumni already started their own company**.
9. **EVS volunteers already have a strong relationship to Europe and this remains stable over time (for 50% of alumni).** After EVS, two thirds of EVS volunteers are more interested in the European topics and 36% feel more European.
10. Participation in EVS often leads to **increasing volunteers' knowledge about, and interest in, other countries and cultures**, as well as in different perspectives and ways of thinking. EVS volunteers tend to become **more open**

to other cultures and often overcome cultural differences.

11. **EVS also makes people more mobile.** Half of the EVS alumni have already changed their living/working country at least once, and even more than once for every one in five alumni. EVS stimulates the volunteers' interest in travelling and discovering new places and cultures.
12. **Through EVS, most volunteers gain a better understanding of the problems faced by certain groups of people in the society and become more committed to help them.** More than 80% of the EVS volunteers and around 80% of the alumni feel more aware of and committed to the inclusion of people with fewer opportunities and in general to work against discrimination.
13. In comparison to other volunteer groups, **Standard Students** tend to have more **improved job chances after EVS, an increased commitment towards community, and more awareness of the inclusion of people with fewer opportunities.**
14. Significantly higher results are also for the **Disadvantaged Job Seekers** who are more interested in **creating their own business/company/organisation or a cultural/youth project, and are more actively participating in social and political life after EVS.**

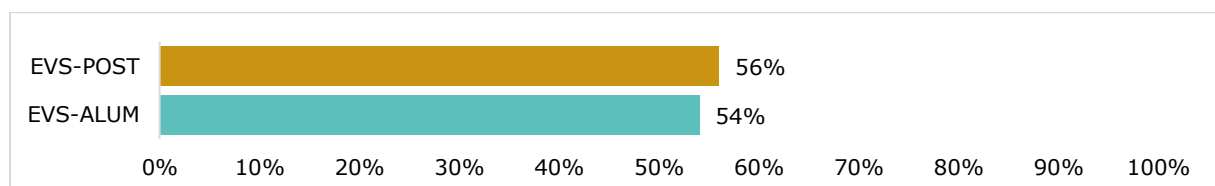
This section analyses the individual impacts of EVS. It is based equally on quantitative data from the online surveys and qualitative data from interviews undertaken as part of the case study process, as well as the literature review and findings from the stakeholder seminar. We base this analysis on the updated table 2-1 "Framework of indicators of impact of transnational volunteering – individuals". We will always analyse first the results focusing on EVS, and if there are interesting differences to the Erasmus Impact Study (EIS), we will discuss them in an additional paragraph.

4.1.1 Improved employability and career prospects

An important dimension of the impact is on the employability and career prospects of EVS volunteers. This relates to volunteers getting a clearer idea about their career aspirations and goals, developing professional skills and attitudes, acquiring experience and contacts for work, increasing their chances to find a job, and ultimately obtaining a job by using their EVS experience.

More than 80% of EVS volunteers and EVS alumni feel that EVS helped them to identify opportunities for their personal and professional future, have a better idea about what they want to do later in life, have better job opportunities and prepare for an international career path.

Figure 4-1 Improved job chances after EVS

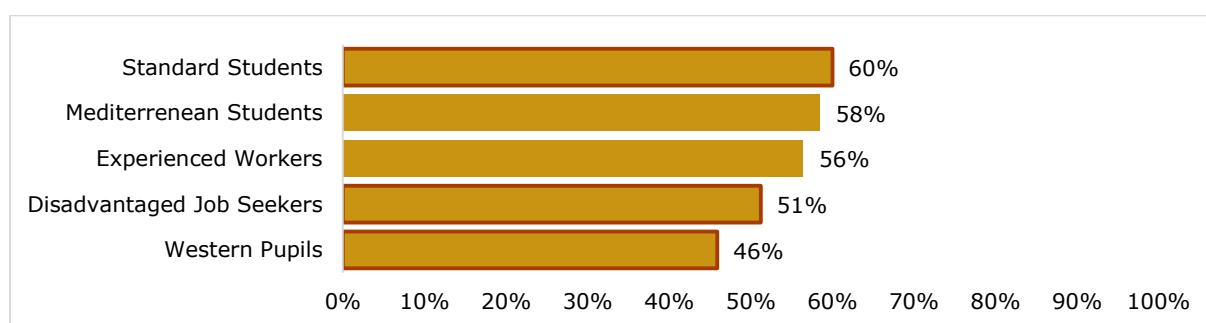


Q: "After taking part in EVS, I now believe that my job chances improved"
 Answer "To a greater extent"
 n = 4 257

More than half of the volunteers believe that their job chances improved after EVS. The most convinced group in this regard are Standard Students (60%), unlike Disadvantaged Job Seekers and Western Pupils who were significantly less convinced about their improved chances on the job market.

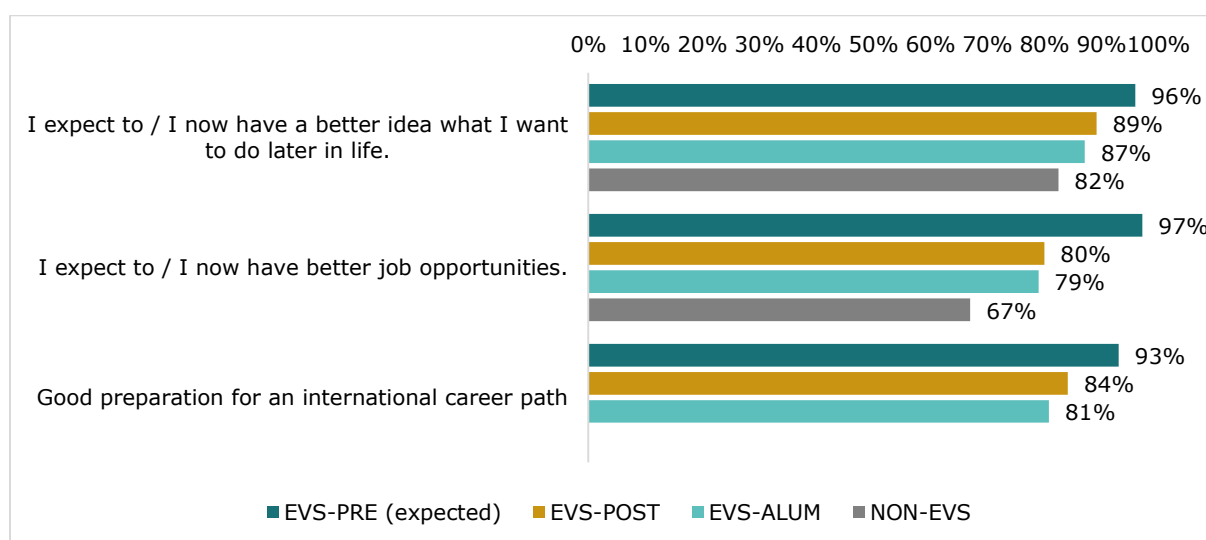
Over 80% of the volunteers state that the EVS experience brought them advantages for their future career, although their expectations were slightly higher (over 90%). Substantially more EVS participants (80%) believe that they have better job opportunities than non-EVS volunteers (67%). The results are also very positive for Disadvantaged Job Seekers, of whom nearly 90% have a better idea about their future life and 80% are well prepared for an international career path. The most substantial difference between the expectations and experience appears in the case of perceptions of one's better job opportunities.

Figure 4-2 Improved job chances after EVS - by volunteers' profiles



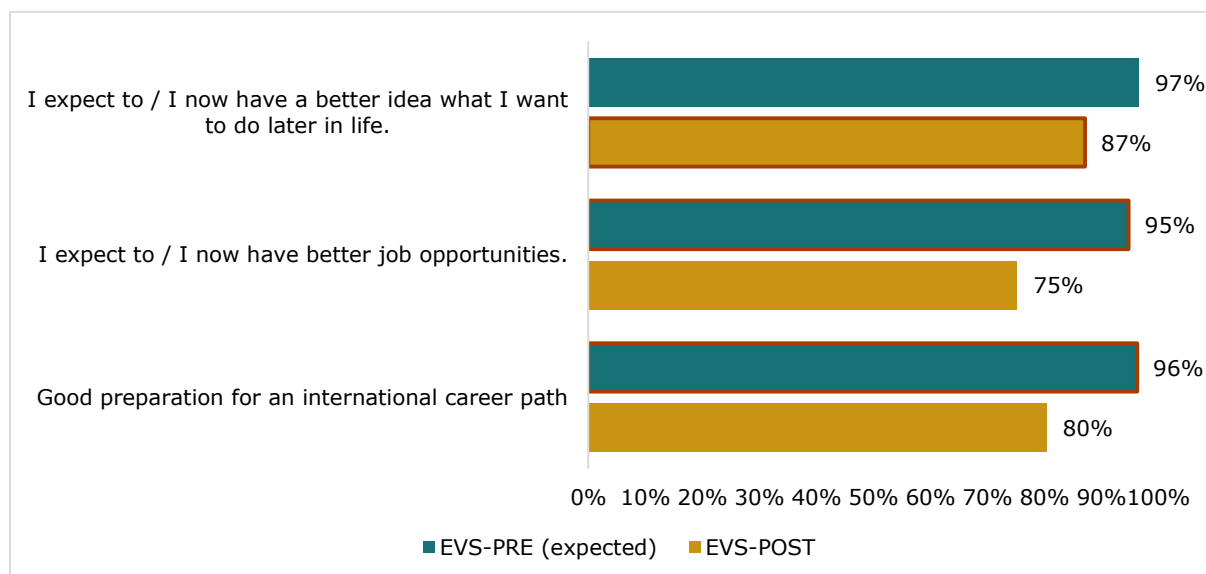
Q: "After taking part in EVS, I now believe that my job chances improved"
Answer "To a greater extent"
n = 2 273

Figure 4-3 Gaining advantages for future career



Q: "What kind of advantages do you expect to gain from your stay abroad?" (EVS-PRE),
"What kind of advantages have you gained from your stay abroad?" (EVS-POST, EVS-ALUM) and "What kind of advantages have you gained from your volunteering experience?" (NON-EVS)
Selected items
Sum of answers "Agree" + "Somewhat agree"
n = 6 341

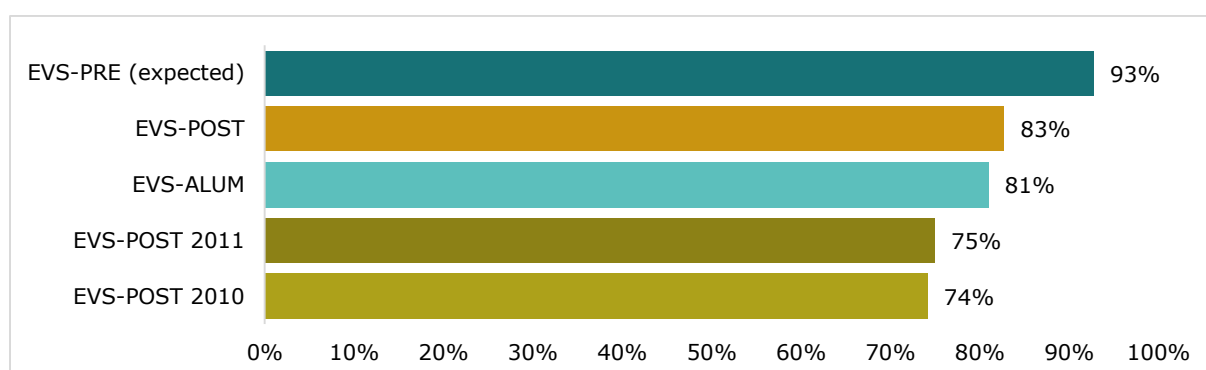
Figure 4-4 Gaining advantages for future career – disadvantaged job seekers



Q: "What kind of advantages do you expect to gain from your stay abroad?" (EVS-PRE),
 "What kind of advantages have you gained from your stay abroad?" (EVS-POST)
 Selected items
 Sum of answers "Agree" + "Somewhat agree"
 "Disadvantaged job seekers" only
 n = 719

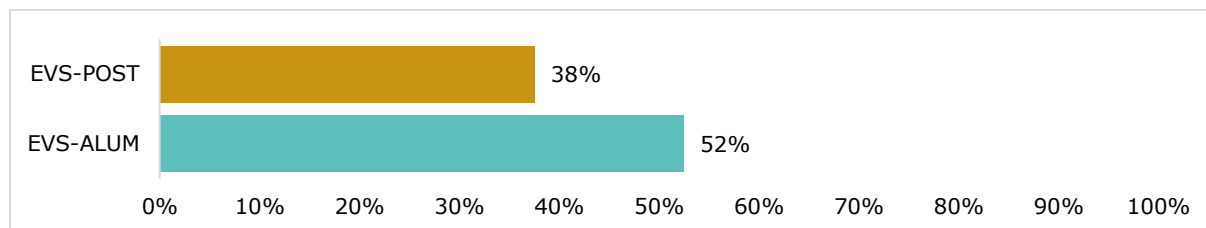
The EVS volunteers surveyed in 2016 show more positive results (over 80%) concerning the ability to identify opportunities for their personal and professional future compared to the evaluation from 2010 and 2011. Their expectations are again slightly higher than the results. EVS alumni have a much clearer idea about their career aspirations and goals compared to recently returned EVS participants, as the former is represented by more than half of individuals, compared to 38% of the latter. Western Pupils are the most determined volunteer profile in this respect. On the contrary, there are significantly fewer representatives of Standard Students who have a better understanding of what their career aspirations are.

Figure 4-5 Learning to identify opportunities for future



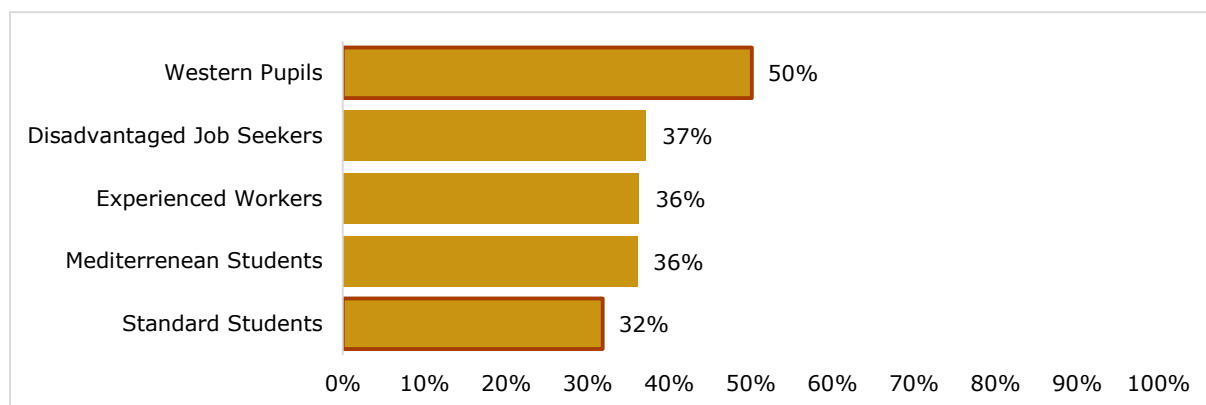
Q: "Through my participation in EVS, I expect to learn better:" (EVS-PRE) and "Through my participation in EVS, I learned better:" (EVS-POST, EVS-ALUM)
 Item "To identify opportunities for my personal or professional future"
 Sum of answers "Definitely" + "To some extent"
 n = 5 928

Figure 4-6 Clearer idea about career aspirations and goals



Q: "After taking part in EVS, I have a clearer idea about my career aspirations and goals..."
 Answer "To a greater extent"
 n = 4 254

Figure 4-7 Clearer idea about career aspirations and goals – by volunteers' profiles



Q: "After taking part in EVS, I have a clearer idea about my career aspirations and goals..."
 Answer "To a greater extent"
 n = 2 273

The EVS organisations are fairly convinced about the positive impact of EVS on the employability of the volunteers (90% stating so in the survey). Their perception differs from the perspective of the EVS volunteers since around 60% of the organisations believe that the volunteers get a clearer idea about their professional career aspirations and goals after EVS, whereas 38% of the volunteers actually confirmed this. On the other hand, the perception of both the organisations and the volunteers is similar concerning the positive impact of EVS on the job chances. According to a third of the EVS organisations, the volunteers are most likely to develop a sense of entrepreneurship during the EVS project.

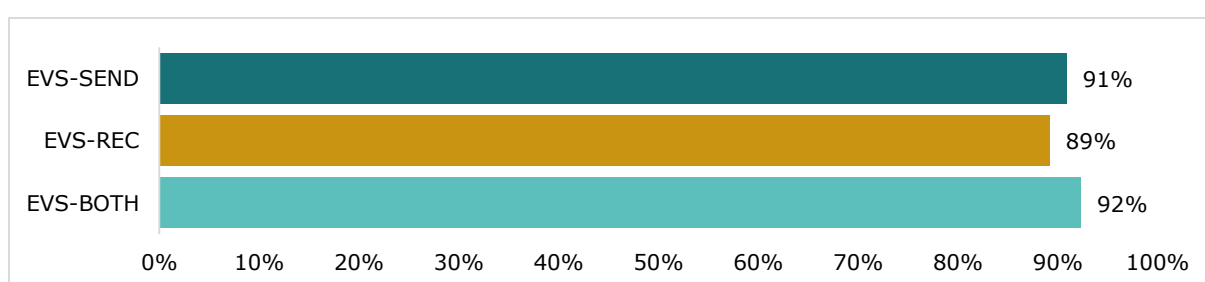
"The volunteers don't necessarily find employment easier than other young people, but they are better informed, they know what is possible for them and how to access it."
 EVS project leader (ADICE),
 FR, 2016

Additionally, 56% of the EVS organisations expect and 58% actually see an increase in job chances for EVS volunteers, according to the online survey. However, in some of the case interviews, project leaders were cautious to assert that work experience gained through EVS improves chances of finding a job. They stressed that thanks to EVS, **volunteers are better informed about their options in the labour market** and this ultimately

helps them to find a job. For example, an interviewed representative from the Youth Services at the City of Lahti, and receiving / sending organisation in Finland, reported that the employment outcomes of participants are not followed on a systematic manner, but the staff are aware of many NEETs returning from their placements who have re-

discovered an interest in finding a job. The interviewee mentioned that older volunteers, those in the second half of their twenties, gain more significant career and occupational related learning – they learn more about what they enjoy doing for a living, what they are good at and what they do not like as much. They tend to finish their EVS with more awareness of their career aspirations. Additionally, according to a representative from the Kohila Open Youth Centre, a receiving organisation in Estonia, the EVS is a chance for volunteers to develop their personalities and gain a clearer understanding of what they want to do in the future. EVS is regarded as a useful way for young people to test out potential careers or re-consider their career path and therefore make informed choices about their career plans (Mieñkowska-Norkiene, 2011). Other results from the online survey also seem to indicate a quite substantial real influence on employment.

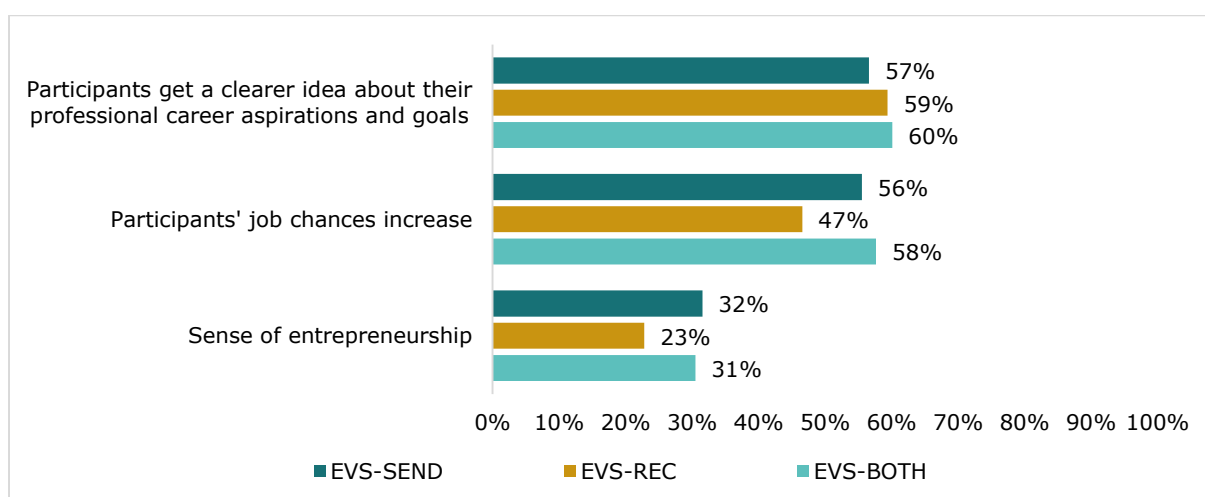
Figure 4-8 Impact of the EVS programme on the employability of the volunteers



Q: "How do you evaluate the impact of the EVS programme on the employability of the volunteers?"

Sum of answers "Very high" + "High"
n = 1 355

Figure 4-9 Organisational perspective on the effects of volunteers' participation in EVS



Q: "Which of the following effects of participation in the project would you expect to notice during and after the project?" (multiple response)

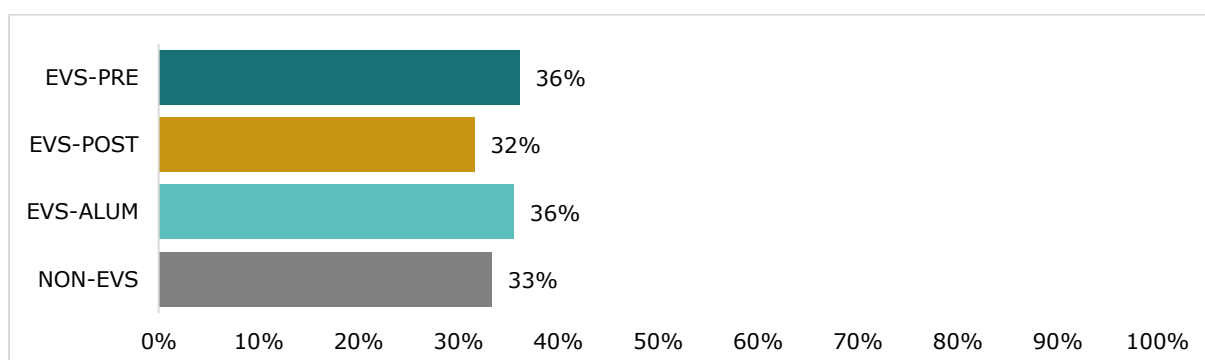
Item "Participants get a clearer idea about their professional career aspirations and goals" and "Participants' job chances increase"
n = 1 389

Q: "Which of the participants' skills and competences are most likely be developed through their participation in the project?" (multiple response)

Item "Sense of entrepreneurship"
n = 1 389

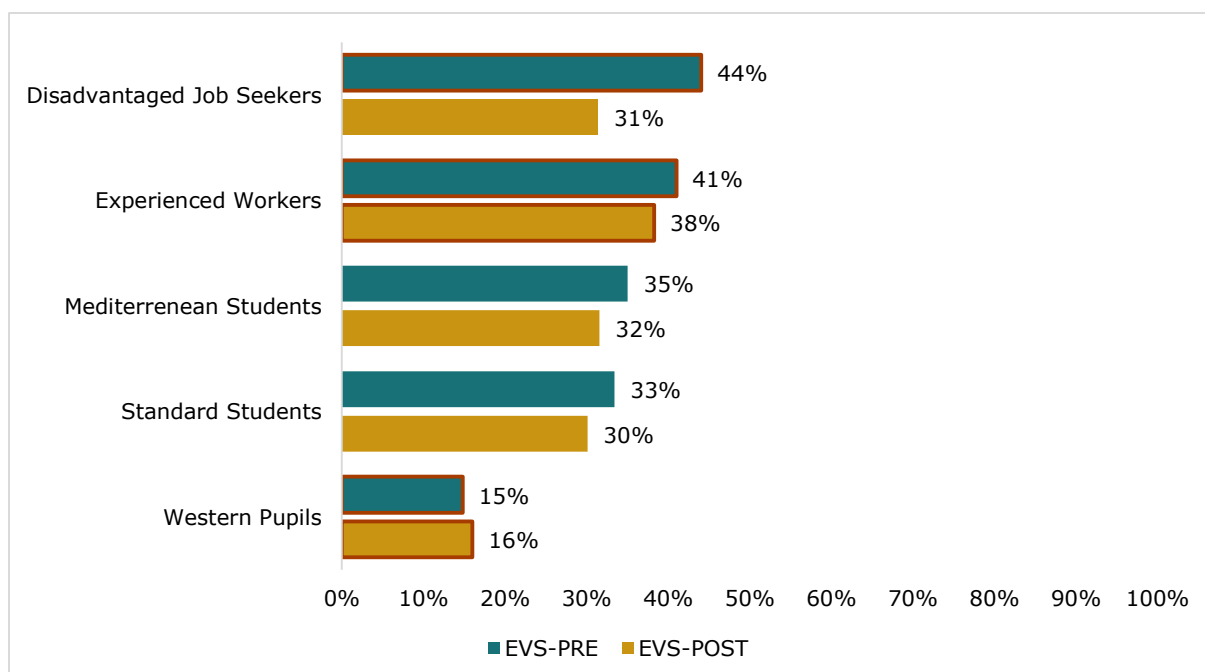
The above stated results about the perceived effect of EVS on the sense of entrepreneurship by the EVS organisations corresponds with the volunteers' interest in creating one's own business or youth project. More than a third of the volunteers are willing to start a company and 47% want to start their own cultural or youth project before embarking on EVS. The share of such volunteers slightly decreases after the EVS experience. These results suggest that the entrepreneurial attitudes of people who decide to participate in the EVS do not increase during their mobility. This is also confirmed by the perspective of EVS organisations, out of which only 32% stated to observe development of the sense of entrepreneurship amongst the volunteers. However, EVS has real effects in that it makes 9% of the alumni really want to start their own company.

Figure 4-10 Interest in creating one's own business/company/organisation and realisation



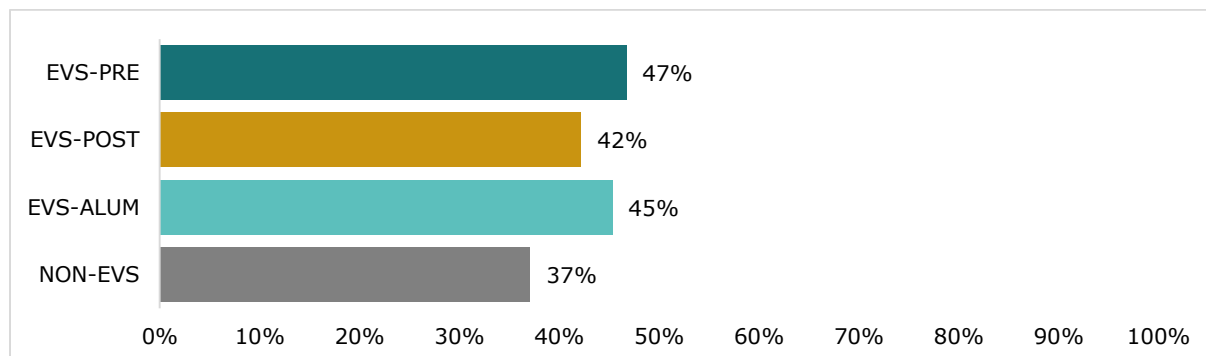
Q: "Would you be interested in creating your own business/company/organisation?"
 Answer "Yes"
 n = 5 947

Figure 4-11 Interest in creating one's own business/company/organisation and realisation - by volunteers' profiles



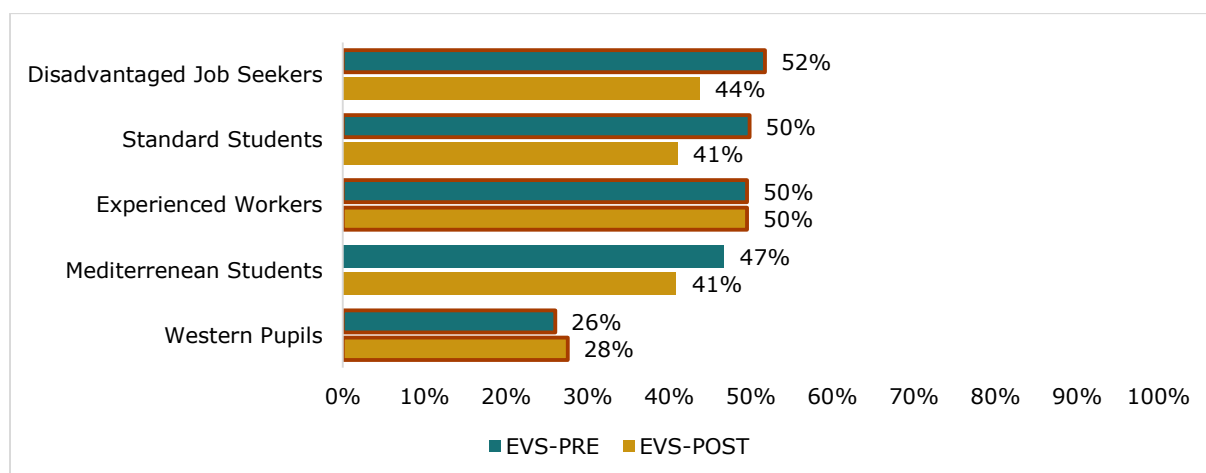
Q: "Would you be interested in creating your own business/company/organisation?"
 Answer "Yes"
 n = 2 272

Figure 4-12 Interest in creating one's own cultural or youth project



Q: "Would you be interested in creating your own cultural or youth project?"
Answer "Yes"
n = 5 963

Figure 4-13 Interest in creating one's own cultural or youth project – by volunteers' profiles



Q: "Would you be interested in creating your own cultural or youth project?"
Answer "Yes"
n = 2 246

Interviews conducted for the case studies confirmed that through EVS volunteers develop soft skills and life skills relevant for employment.

"Some [volunteers] are unrecognisable at the end of their experience in terms of how open they become... more mature, independent...how they make plans, manage and organise their lives..." EVS mentor (Euroacción), ES, 2017

Life skills mentioned by interviewees include aspects such as following a daily schedule, an increased sense of responsibility, the ability to adapt to new or unforeseen situations,

"During EVS, I learned to work according to a fixed schedule. By taking responsibility for a big group of children and young people (...), I improved my sense of responsibility. I also improved my leadership skills while organising study visits of young people coming from other countries." EVS volunteer in IT, 2014-2015

flexibility, resilience, the ability to cope with stress, increased sense of initiative, problem solving skills, or critical thinking. Soft skills mentioned include interacting with others in a professional context, leadership skills, and team working skills. An ex-EVS volunteer from Ukraine, who did her mobility in Estonia felt that the EVS experience provided her with strong communication, organisation,

leadership and teamwork skills, which she recognises will be a big advantage for her in getting a job after completing her Master's. Similarly, an EVS volunteer who is currently doing their mobility in Spain believes that the experience may help her find a job as she is gaining a better understanding of different types of jobs and careers. She reported that she now feels more comfortable with working under time pressure and embracing different ways of working, and is learning to be more positive and proactive, and contributing with new ideas.

A study by ECORYS (2014) revealed that there is a clear match between the competences developed through EVS and the skills employers are seeking in a new employee: communication, cooperation, flexibility, planning and organising, taking initiative and working in a team, among others. On the other hand, the same study found a mismatch between the competences that employers find extremely important (handling clients, respecting rules, giving and receiving feedback) which are not however developed during EVS.

Results from the online survey confirm that indeed soft skills and life skills are considered to be improved through EVS more than hard skills (see chapter 4.1.4).

The EVS also contributes to the career orientation and opens new career perspectives. Interviews with volunteers and organisations revealed that the EVS helps volunteers decide about what they want to do (or do not want to do) in the future, by enabling them to have a clearer idea about their career aspirations or career path. In some cases, the EVS gives the opportunity to try out a profession or an occupation. On the other hand, for some volunteers it is also a break in their educational or professional trajectories, which gives them time to experiment, develop personal projects and plan their future.

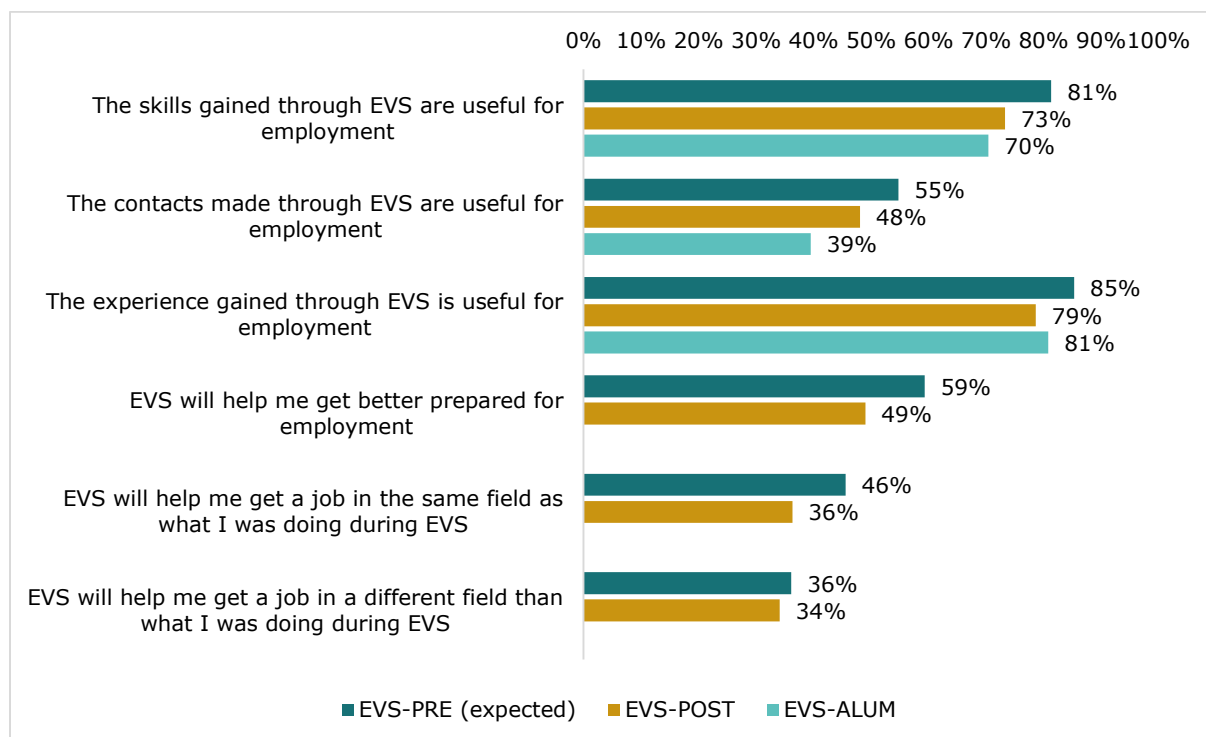
Most of the volunteers interviewed also confirmed that the EVS experience enabled them to have a **clearer idea about what they want to do in life**. Several even changed their professional plans for reasons linked to the discovery enabled by their mobility and the skills acquired through their EVS project. For example, a volunteer who did her EVS in Germany reported that the EVS confirmed her interest to pursue a career in education but shifted her focus from the 'old-style' teaching approach to more inclusive learning focused on the learner. In her view, the time she spent volunteering at the school in Germany made her realise that she would like to become a teaching assistant (rather than a teacher) to be able to use alternative teaching methods to facilitate children's development.

"Thanks to EVS, I learned about how NGOs work. As a result, I discovered that what I want to do in life is to work for a non-profit association because that is where I can do meaningful work for the benefit of many people." **EVS volunteer in BH, 2012-2013**

Several alumni reported that their experience in EVS made them determined to pursue a career in the youth sector or in the third sector in general because they realised that in this way they can do meaningful work for other people or communities.

The EVS experience is found helpful to boost employability and find employment. According to the survey, the volunteers expect effects of EVS on the different aspects related to employability. Most of the respondents in the survey assume that EVS will be useful for employment (81%) in general and through the skills acquired (85%). However, volunteers are realistic in the direct impact on employment and thus have lower expectations for EVS to help them find a job in a similar (46%) or different (36%) field. The share of EVS volunteers agreeing to these statements post return are slightly lower, but the order of aspects remains the same. Alumni again show similar patterns to the current EVS volunteers in those aspects which are also applicable to them.

Figure 4-14 Benefits of EVS for employment of the participants

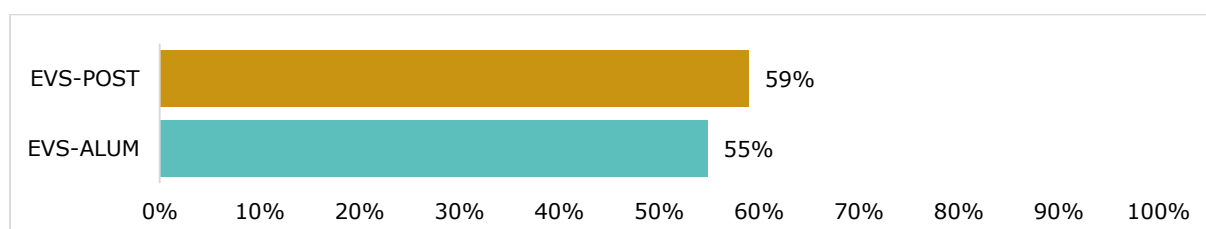


Q: "Please choose the statements to which you agree:" (multiple response)
Selected items
n = 6 078

The volunteers find EVS helpful also in terms of finding their first job and career development. While both post-return EVS volunteers and alumni share similar views on the profitability of EVS for finding their first job (over 50%), the respondents diverge concerning career development. Nearly 70% of the recently returned EVS volunteers find EVS helpful in this regard, but only 45% of the alumni agree.

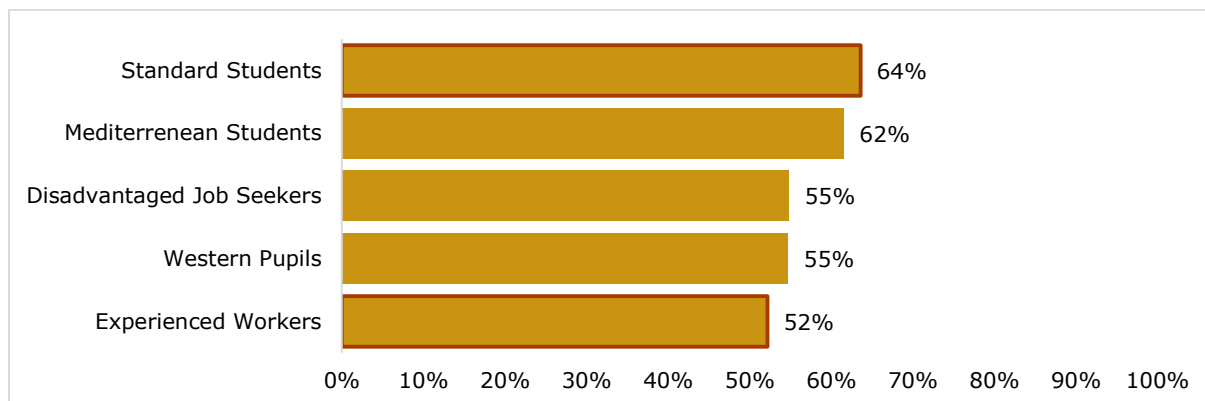
The benefit of EVS to the related career aspects is most significantly perceived by Standard Students. The significantly lower proportion of Experienced Workers who see EVS profitable for finding the first job should be understood in the context of this volunteer profile to which the situation is not relevant anymore, as they have already been employed. The same can be assumed about Western Pupils who might be much less concerned about their career given their young age.

Figure 4-15 Profitability of EVS for finding a first job



Q: "How would you assess your experience abroad in terms of profit for finding your first job?"
Sum of answers "Highly profitable" + "Profitable"
n = 4 322

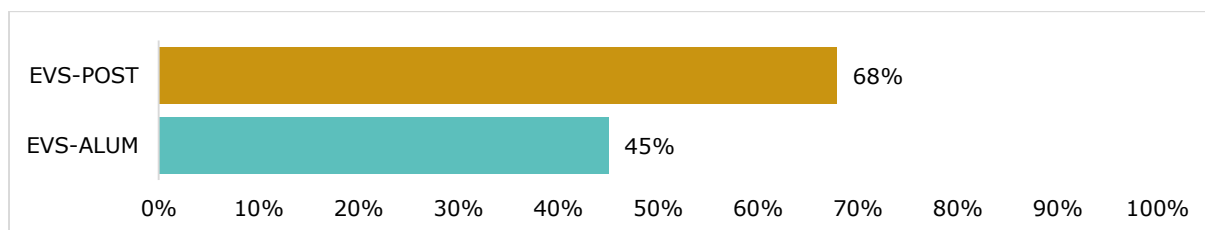
Figure 4-16 Profitability of EVS for finding a first job – by volunteers' profiles



Q: "How would you assess your experience abroad in terms of profit for finding your first job?"

Sum of answers "Highly profitable" + "Profitable"
n = 2 273

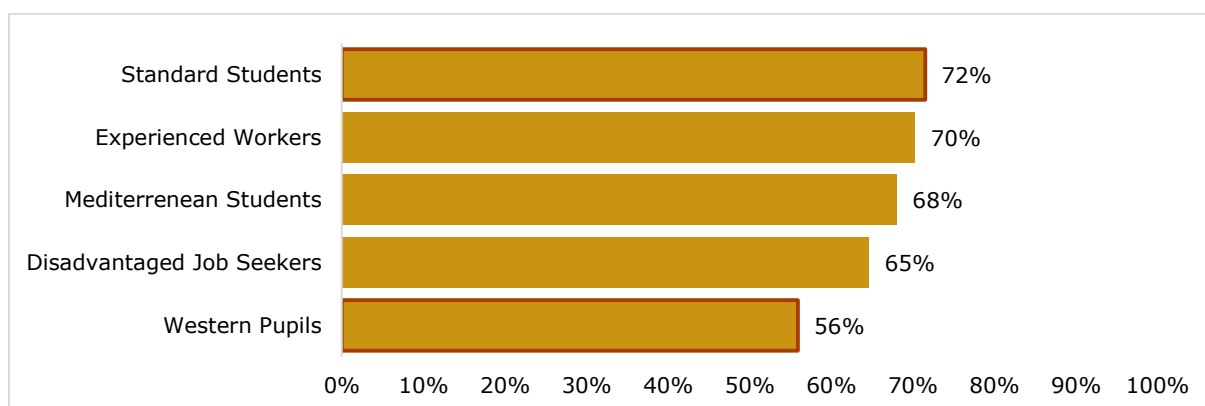
Figure 4-17 Profitability of EVS for career development



Q: "How would you assess your experience abroad in terms of profit for your career development?"

Sum of answers "Highly profitable" + "Profitable"
n = 4 336

Figure 4-18 Profitability of EVS for career development – by volunteers' profiles



Q: "How would you assess your experience abroad in terms of profit for your career development?"

Sum of answers "Highly profitable" + "Profitable"
n = 2 273

This was confirmed in the case study interviews, when some volunteers reported being **employed at the same**

"After EVS, I was able to find a job in a kindergarten in Berlin, which was only possible through the previous experience at the school. To support my career, the school provided me with a generous recommendation letter that helped me obtain my current job." **EVS volunteer in DE, 2015-2016**

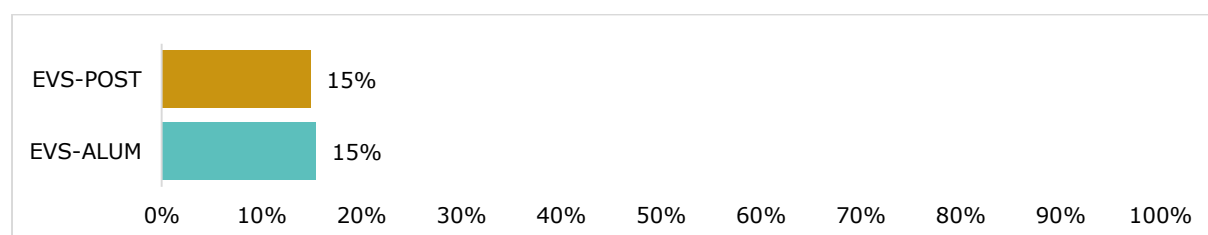
organisation where they did their EVS. This was the case for an ex-EVS volunteer who did her EVS in Spain. She reported the experience gave her the opportunity to steer her professional career towards her main field of interest, non-formal education, and she is now working at Euroacción, the organisation that hosted her. Similarly, a volunteer who is currently doing her EVS in the Netherlands reported that after completing her mobility, she is going to develop her own project in the host organisation. Others returned to their home countries and are now **employed as EVS coordinators in their local organisations.** For example, one Romanian volunteer who carried out her EVS in Spain was employed upon her return as an EVS Project Coordinator at Team for Youth, a sending, receiving and coordinating organisation in Romania. Others found a job in the host country thanks to the recommendations provided by their EVS host organisation. A few volunteers also referred to the work experience gained in EVS as an asset when looking for a job. Similarly, an ex-EVS volunteer who did his EVS in Serbia believed that a positive aspect of his EVS was the access to the international networks of organisations, which usually is not available when participating in local volunteering. He expressed how the network is useful after the EVS experience for future training possibilities and job opportunities.

Indeed, a study by ECORYS (2014) found that three in four employers surveyed agreed that EVS enhances the job prospects of volunteers. The majority of ex-EVS volunteers (67%) and of EVS organisations (88%) felt the same. The vast majority of employers (92%) suggested including the EVS experience in the applicant's CV, 52% of them were also of the opinion that EVS experience should be mentioned in the letter of intent and 66% in the job interviews. Interestingly, only 84% of EVS volunteers reported having included EVS in their CV, 35% in the letter of intent and 37% mentioned it during a job interviews, which is lower than the employers' expectations.

There are also more direct confirmations of the employment-related impact of EVS. In 15% of cases, EVS has a direct benefit for the participants, as they were offered a position by the organisation or its branch. Moreover, the percentage of such cases is the same for the volunteers that returned recently and the EVS alumni.

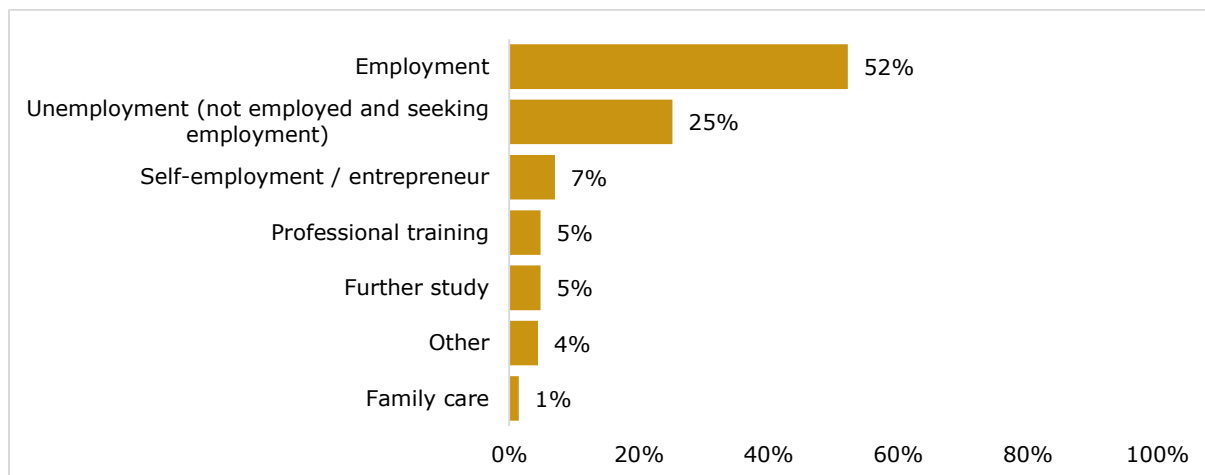
According to the survey, only 25% of those EVS alumni who were unemployed before their participation in EVS are also unemployed at the time of the survey, while the rest found some kind of other occupation. The majority of the alumni works - 52% being in employment and 7% being self-employed, while 10% are enhancing their knowledge through study or professional training.

Figure 4-19 Recruited/position offered by host organisations



Q: "Have you been recruited or offered a position by the organisation or its branch where you completed your volunteer placement?"
 Answer "Yes"
 n = 3 831

Figure 4-20 Current employment status

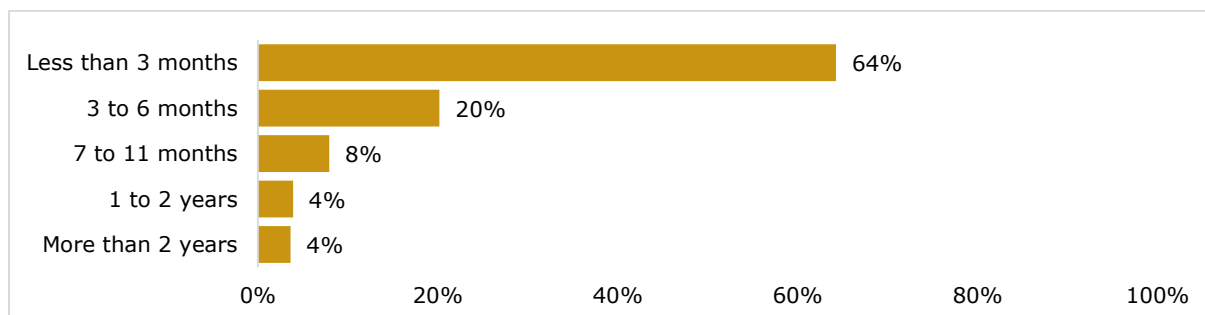


Q: "What is your current employment status?"

Only respondents who declared to be unemployed and actively looking for a job before taking part in EVS
n = 540

Moreover, the EVS alumni do not seem to have serious problems in getting employment. Nearly two out of three found a job within three months, and 84% within six months. Only few needed one to two years (4%) or more (4%). The EVS alumni do not consider themselves to earn substantially more than average. More importantly, the results show that **37% of the EVS alumni hold managerial positions and 5% work as chief executives**. The remaining 58% hold no management positions in their jobs.

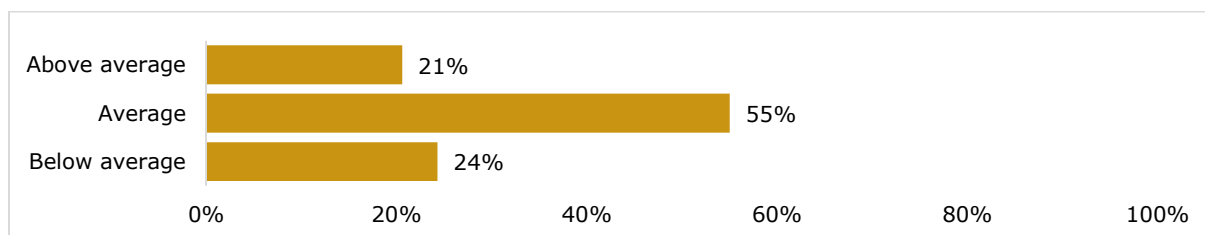
Figure 4-21 Time spent for finding first job, alumni



Q: "How many months did it take to find your first job?"

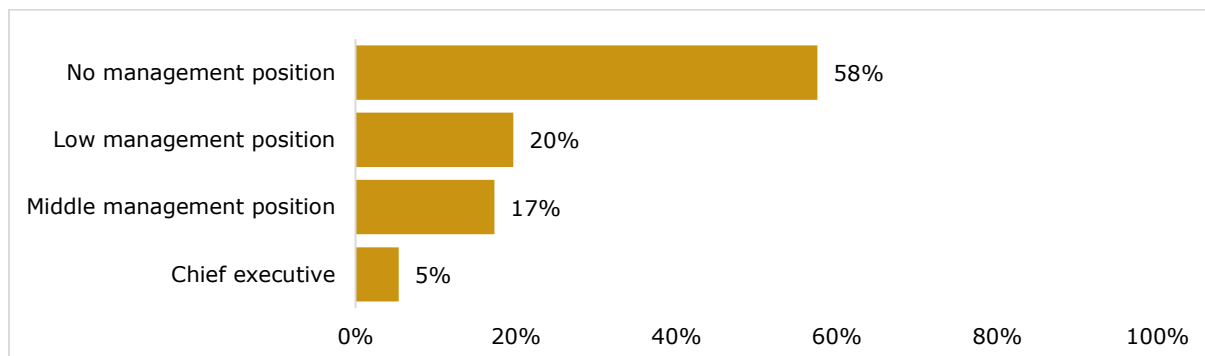
n = 1 861

Figure 4-22 Relative current income, alumni



Q: "Please assess your current salary in relative terms, compared to other professionals in your field with the same level of education."
n = 1 130

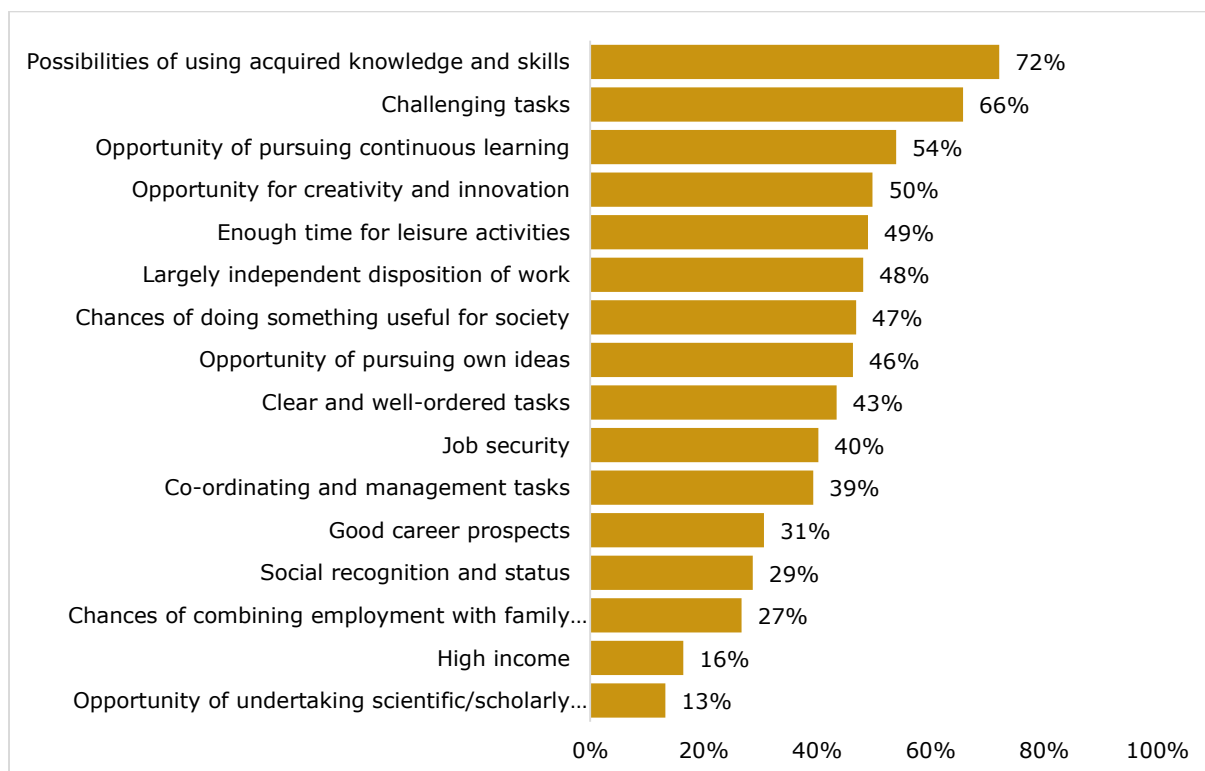
Figure 4-23 Current job position, alumni



Q: "What is your current job position?"
n = 1 130

Jobs of employed EVS alumni in most cases include the possibilities of using acquired knowledge and skills, challenging tasks and provide opportunity of pursuing continuous learning. However, only 16% of the alumni confirmed having a high salary. Nearly half of the former EVS participants have jobs that ensure opportunities for creativity, innovation and pursuing own ideas, and allow them to dedicate enough time for leisure activities.

Figure 4-24 Share of alumni who confirm that their job had the following characteristics



Q: "Does your current professional situation have one or more of the following characteristics?" (multiple response)
n = 1 109

A comparison of the career-related impacts of EVS and Erasmus reveals only few but substantial differences. While 15% of the EVS volunteers received a job offer from their host organisation, this was the case for 36% of the Erasmus alumni, albeit those on internships, not on studies. Given the different type of organisations that offer volunteering and normal internships, however, it is not surprising that those on internships are more likely to receive job offers. Regarding the time needed to find a job, we see substantially more Erasmus alumni finding jobs within three months and far fewer having to search for more than two years (0.5%). We also see that Erasmus alumni are slightly more represented on the managerial level, which coincides with a higher share of these alumni feeling that they earn a high income. Finally, EVS alumni tend to work less in high-income environments than Erasmus alumni (17% EVS compared to 54% Erasmus), and the latter also have more opportunity for scientific work (14% to 46%), more often possess a good work-life balance (28% to 59%), a social recognition and status (29% to 66%) and good career prospects (31% to 70%). On the other hand, slightly more EVS alumni (9%) than Erasmus alumni (7%) realise their own start-up.

Once employed, in many aspects **EVS volunteers have an advantage in their career due to their international experience**, according to views of the EVS organisations. A third of the EVS organisations regard an international experience as important for career development, regardless of the professional level, and 60% observe that staff with international experience are more likely to take over tasks with higher responsibility. Additionally, 22% of the organisations also pay higher salaries because of a previous international experience and nearly half of them state that such an experience makes you likely to advance faster in your career.

Table 4-1 Advantages due to international experience, EVS organisations

How important is staff applicants' international experience for career development in your organisation at the following levels? (very important/important)	Young professionals	37%
	Experienced experts	33%
	Enterprise leadership/management	34%
Are internationally experienced graduates more likely to take over work tasks with high responsibility after a couple of years in your organisation?	Yes, substantially more frequent	27%
	Yes, somewhat more frequent	33%
Do young graduates with international experience in your organisation often receive higher salaries than those without?	Yes	13%
	No, because it is an essential element for the recruitment	16%
Do graduates with five years of work experience in your organisation who have previous international experience receive a higher salary on average?	Yes	22%
Are graduates with international experience who have worked within your organisation for at least five years more likely to advance their career faster than their colleagues without international experience?	Yes	48%

Table 4-2 Share of alumni who confirm that their job had the following characteristics

	EVS alumni
Possibilities of using acquired knowledge and skills	72%
Challenging tasks	64%
Opportunity of pursuing continuous learning	54%

Opportunity for creativity and innovation	50%
Enough time for leisure activities	50%
Largely independent disposition of work	49%
Opportunity of pursuing own ideas	48%
Chances of doing something useful for society	46%
Clear and well-ordered tasks	45%
Job security	40%
Co-ordinating and management tasks	39%
Good career prospects	31%
Social recognition and status	29%
Chances of combining employment with family tasks	28%
High income	17%
Opportunity of undertaking scientific/scholarly work	14%

From the alumni perspective, the career impacts are diverse. While a vast majority have a job in which they can use their competences and have challenging tasks, only a minority seem to have a good work-life balance. Also, very few have an opportunity to undertake scientific and scholarly work. Moreover, EVS alumni do not tend to work in high-income environments.

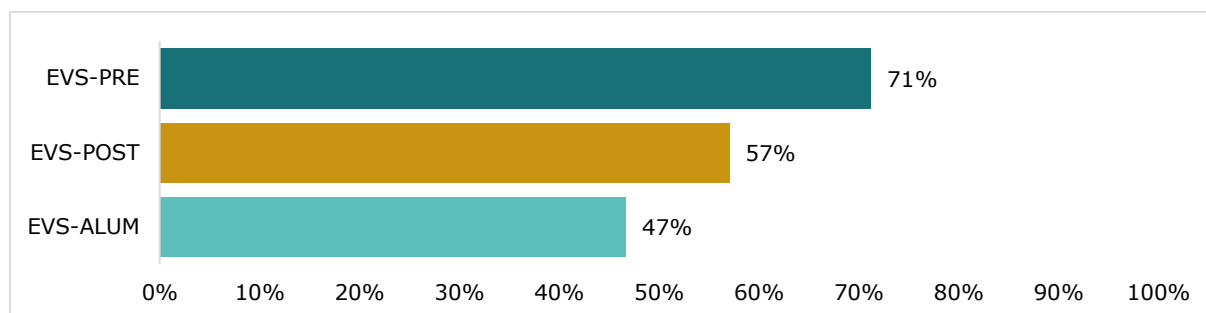
4.1.2 Increased participation in the civic and political life

Increased participation in the civic and political life is the second individual impact dimension of EVS studied in our research. We analyse whether EVS increases the participation in the voluntary activities, the voter participation, as well as the participation in the civic and political life, and whether it better prepares the volunteers to actively participate in social and political life and, especially, in similar youth projects.

First of all, EVS promotes a **bond between volunteers and participating organisations**, which could foster such engagement. Although volunteers are naturally in closest touch with their sending organisation prior to going abroad (i.e. when they have to organise their mobility), also almost half of the EVS alumni declare that they relate to their home organisation strongly or moderately, staying in touch with them even for a long time after their return from EVS (see Figure 4-1).

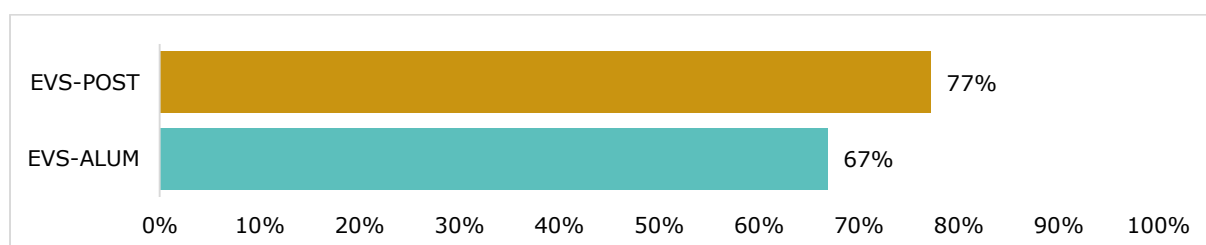
The relationship with host organisations is even stronger (see Figure 4-2)– three quarters of post-return volunteers and two thirds of EVS alumni declare to relate to them strongly or moderately. Thus, those who (on average) spent ten months with the organisation abroad create a bond which can in many cases last for years. Interestingly, the relationship with both the home and host organisations is one of the few cases where there are no substantial differences among individual volunteer profiles (such as Standard Student and Mediterranean Student).

Figure 4-25 Strength of relationship to the home volunteering organisation



Q: "How strongly do you relate to your home volunteering organisation?"
Sum of answers "Strongly" + "Moderately"
n = 6 160

Figure 4-26 Strength of relationship to the host volunteering organisation



Q: "How strongly do you relate to your host volunteering organisation?"
Sum of answers "Strongly" + "Moderately"
n = 4 510

The online survey, literature and case study interviews reveal that while there is some evidence of an increased civic engagement among the EVS volunteers, the increase is not necessarily high because most of the volunteers had already been strongly involved in the civic and community projects at local or national level before the EVS. From the 15 case studies conducted, volunteers in 13 countries⁷⁰ reported that they had previously done volunteering and/or been actively engaged in the civic and political life before their EVS experience. Nevertheless, the EVS is an opportunity for many volunteers to learn further about how to participate in the social and civic life. For example, an EVS volunteer in Germany confirmed that he benefited from the practical activities organised by his host organisation, such as frequent communal dinners and barbeques, city tours and museum visits. He experienced different parts of the German culture and learned how to live in Germany, which turned out to be useful for him when he obtained a job and moved there permanently.

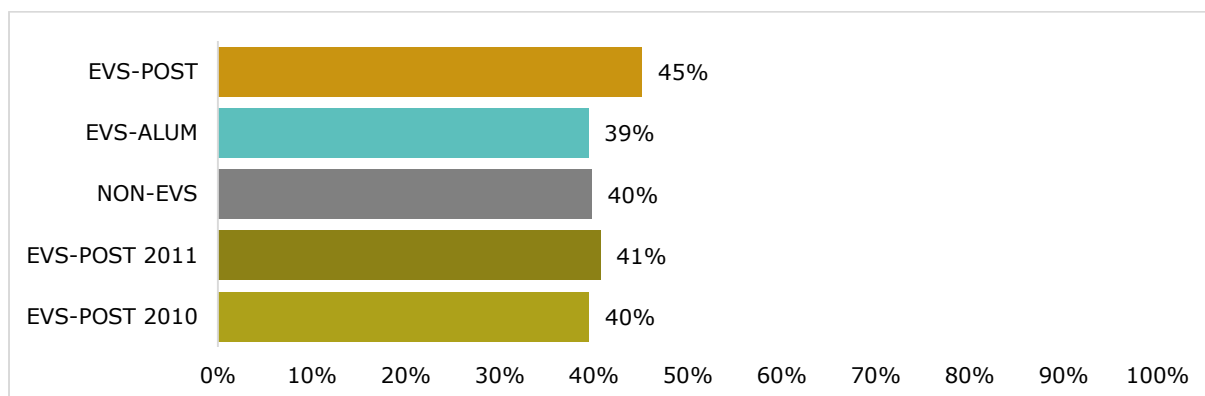
According to an EVS volunteer in Turkey, while she was already active in the civic and political life in her home country before EVS, the mobility experience has given her different perspectives through learning about different cultures. As for an EVS volunteer from Russia who is currently doing her EVS in Estonia, she already feels motivated to do a similar programme when returning to Russia, despite this being her first experience of volunteering as in her home country volunteering is still a new concept.

A similar impact, in regard to EVS preparing young people for active participation in society, was found from a 2011 survey (European Commission, 2011b). The survey

⁷⁰ DE, EE, ES, FI, FR, HU, IT, PL, PT, RO, RS, TK, UA

found that 80% of participants in EVS feel better prepared to participate actively in the social and political issues after their EVS (40% feel 'definitely' better prepared, and another 40% feel 'to some extent' better prepared).

Figure 4-27 Effect on preparedness to participate actively in social and political issues

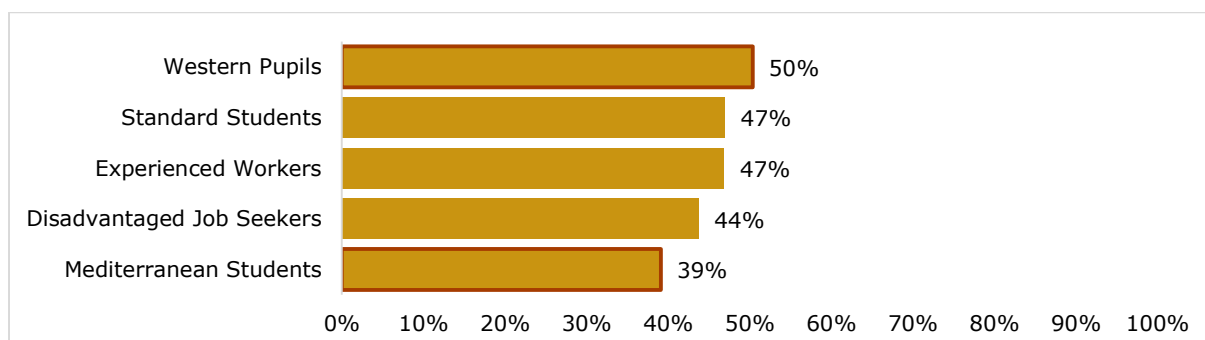


Q: "After taking part in EVS, I am now better prepared to participate actively in social or political issues..." (EVS-POST, EVS-ALUM) and "After taking part in the volunteering, I am now better prepared to participate actively in social or political issues..." (NON-EVS)
 Answer "To a greater extent"
 n = 4 347

According to the survey results of the present study, 45% of the EVS volunteers believe upon return that they are now **better prepared to participate actively in society** and, in addition, 60% claim that they now really **participate more than before** (see Figure 4-3). Besides those who had just finished their stay, 40% of EVS alumni perceived benefits to be prepared to participate in the social and political life, which is very close to the results of the previous EVS evaluations conducted in 2010 and 2011 and also to the results of non-EVS volunteers. The effect is particularly strong for Western Europe pupils and the weakest for Mediterranean students.

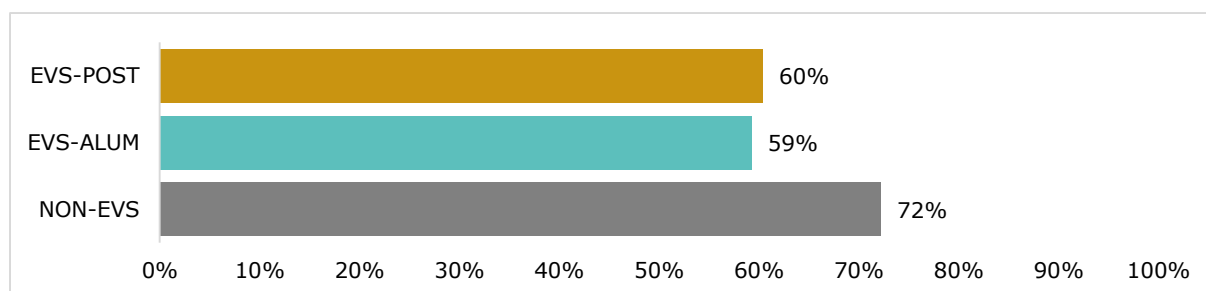
While three out of five post-return volunteers as well as EVS alumni claim that they are more active in the social and political life after return, the share is even higher for the control group of volunteers who stay within their own country. Again, a possible explanation can be that most EVS volunteers already had prior volunteering experience and therefore most likely had high levels of social engagement.

Figure 4-28 Effect on preparedness to participate actively in social and political issues, by volunteers' profiles



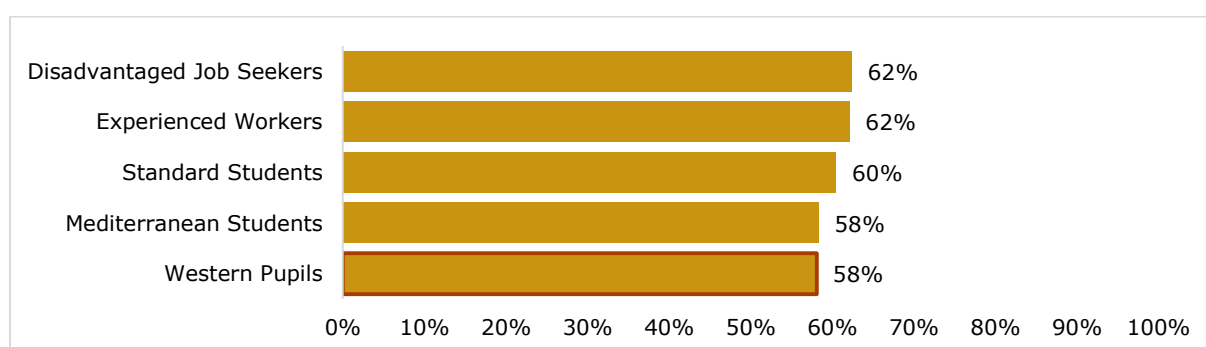
Q: "After taking part in EVS, I am now better prepared to participate actively in social or political issues..."
Answer "To a greater extent"
n = 2 273

Figure 4-29 Increased participation in the social and political life



Q: "Did your EVS mobility increase your..." (EVS-POST, EVS-ALUM) and "Did your volunteering experience increase your..." (NON-EVS) (multiple response)
Item "Participation in the social and political life"
n = 4 179

Figure 4-30 Increased participation in social and political life, by volunteers' profiles

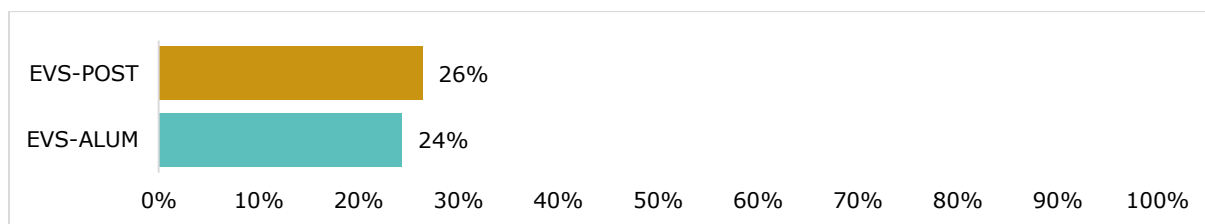


Q: "Did your EVS mobility increase your..." (multiple response)
Item "Participation in the social and political life"
n = 2 179

This assumption is also confirmed when looking at a control question (see Figure 4-7). Percentages decrease by half when the respondents are also offered an option to answer that they participate to the same extent as before. In that case, only about a quarter of post-return volunteers and EVS alumni declare a substantial impact on their participation, while **the majority was active both before and after the EVS stay**.

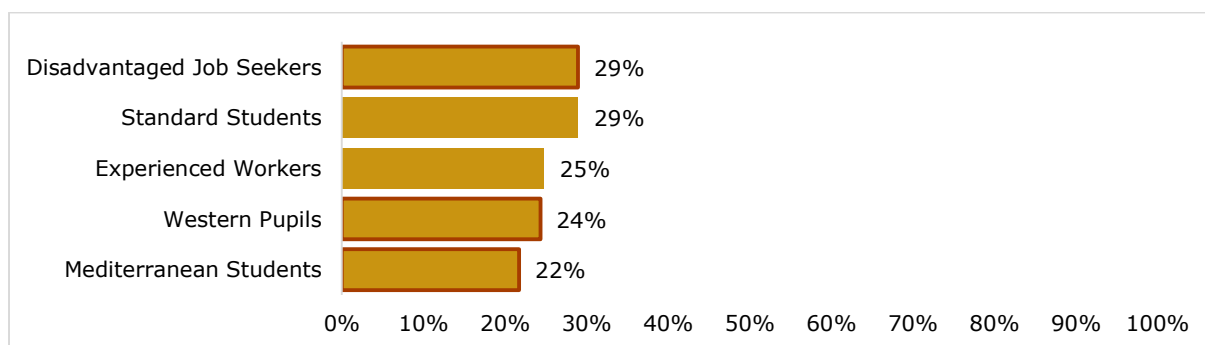
The most positive and significant change in this regard relates to the disadvantaged job seekers (nearly a third), while the share of Mediterranean students (22%) was statistically significantly lower compared to the other profiles (see Figure 4-8).

Figure 4-31 Volunteers who participate in the social and political life to a greater extent after EVS



Q: "After taking part in EVS, I now participate in social and political life..."
 Answer "To a greater extent"
 n = 4 269

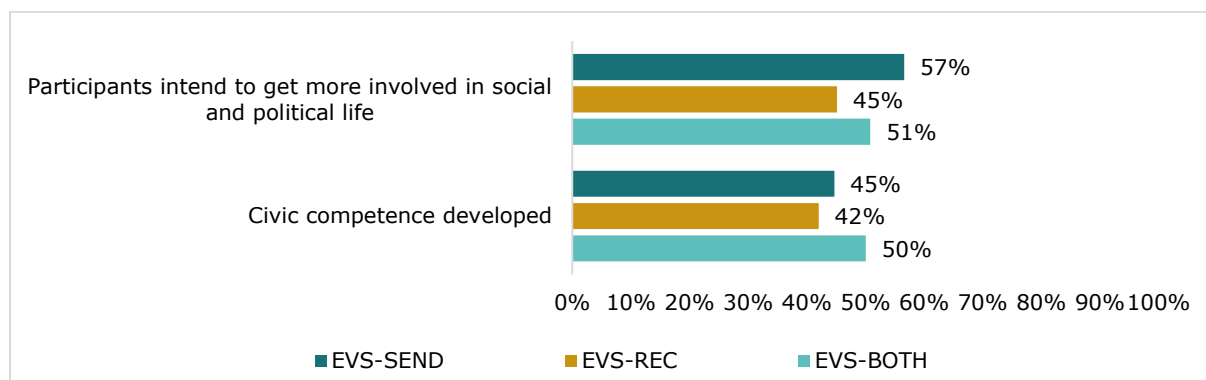
Figure 4-32 Volunteers who participate in social and political life to a greater extent after EVS, by volunteers' profiles



Q: "After taking part in EVS, I now participate in social and political life..."
 Answer "To a greater extent"
 n = 2 280

In general, the perceptions of the EVS volunteers correspond to the perspective of EVS organisations. **Half of the EVS organisations claims that EVS develops volunteers' civic competence and involvement in the social and political life (see Figure 4-9).** The sending organisations are slightly more positive about this effect than the receiving organisations.

Figure 4-33 Perspective of organisations on the impact on civic engagement



Q: "Which of the participants' skills and competences are likely to be developed through their participation in the project?" (EVS-SEND) and "Which of the participants' skills and competences were most likely developed through their participation in the project?" (EVS-REC, EVS-BOTH) (multiple response)
Item: "Civic competence"
n = 1 389

Q: "Which of the following effects of participation in the project would you expect to notice during and after the project?" (EVS-SEND) and "Which of the participants' skills and competences were most likely developed through their participation in the project?" (EVS-REC, EVS-BOTH) (multiple response)
Item: "Participants intend to get more involved in social and political life"
n = 1 378

EVS motivates some volunteers to do even more voluntary service for the host community besides their work in EVS. In the case study in Portugal, two of the EVS volunteers that were doing their EVS in Faro reported to be engaged in other civic initiatives and to volunteer at local level besides the activities they were carrying out as part of their EVS. For example, one volunteer was helping a local organisation with collecting leftover food from the supermarkets and distributing it to immigrants and homeless people. She also did some voluntary work at a local cultural festival (i.e. comedy show). The volunteer believes that the EVS may have boosted her motivation to contribute to these local volunteering actions, but she emphasised that she was already an active citizen engaged in various civic projects before EVS. Another volunteer started her own civic action, besides EVS, to help improve the situation of animals in the local community in cooperation with other local organisations. She thus volunteered, in parallel to EVS, to advance this project.

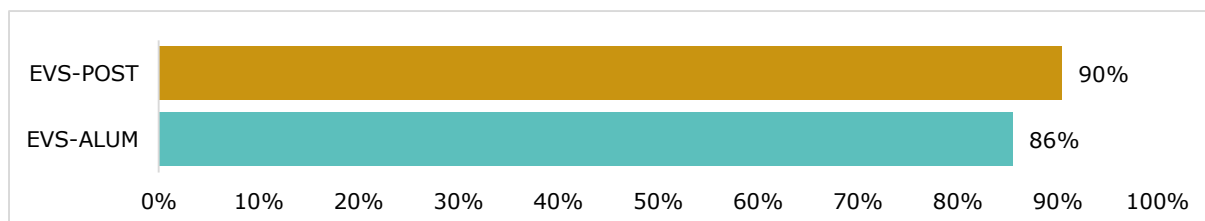
This finding was confirmed by participants in the stakeholder seminar, who expressed that some key factors which affect the impact EVS has on volunteers is the extent of volunteers' engagement in local activities outside of the EVS, as well as volunteers having a 'mini-project' within their EVS to impact the local community. Based on this, one of the recommendations from this discussion was to give more responsibility and autonomy to volunteers in order to develop their ideas, tasks and projects within the EVS placement.⁷¹

The EVS experience itself feels fulfilling for the vast majority of volunteers, which also motivates them to engage further after coming back home (see Figure 4-10). Around 90% of EVS volunteers **feel that they have achieved something to the benefit of**

⁷¹ This was expressed in the stakeholder seminar.

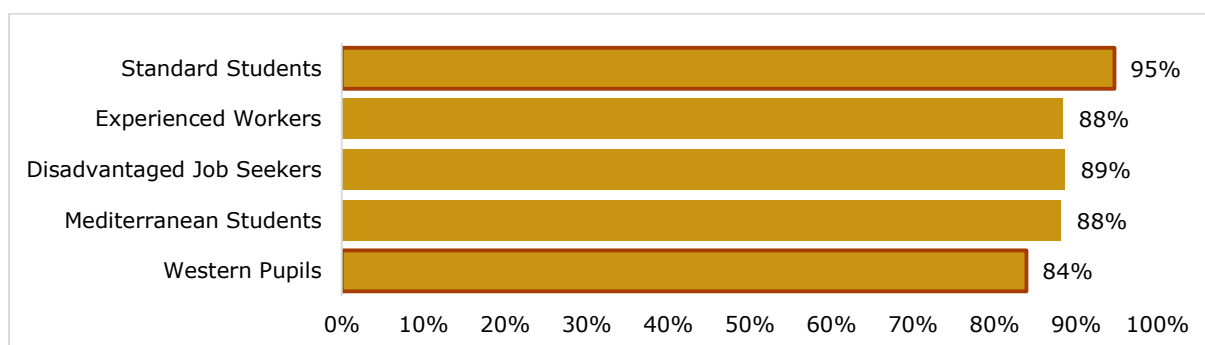
their community or society. In this case, standard students are significantly more represented (95%) than Western Pupils (84%).

Figure 4-34 Perceived social impact of individual EVS participation



Q: "What kind of advantages have you gained from your stay abroad?"
 Item: "I believe I have achieved something in the interest of the community or society."
 Sum of answers "Agree" + "Somewhat agree"
 n = 4 533

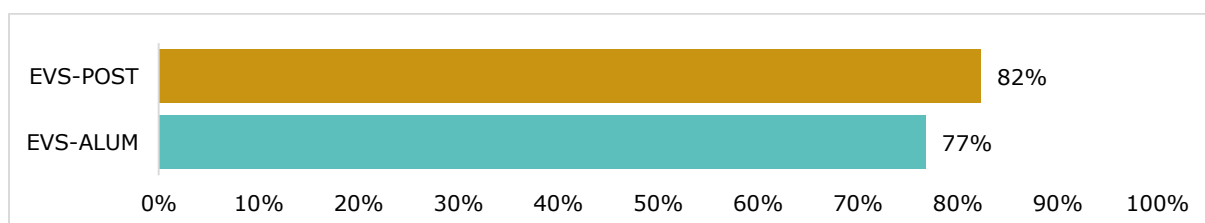
Figure 4-35 Perceived social impact of individual EVS participation, by volunteers' profiles



Q: "What kind of advantages have you gained from your stay abroad?"
 Item: "I believe I have achieved something in the interest of the community or society."
 Sum of answers "Agree" + "Somewhat agree"
 n = 2 389

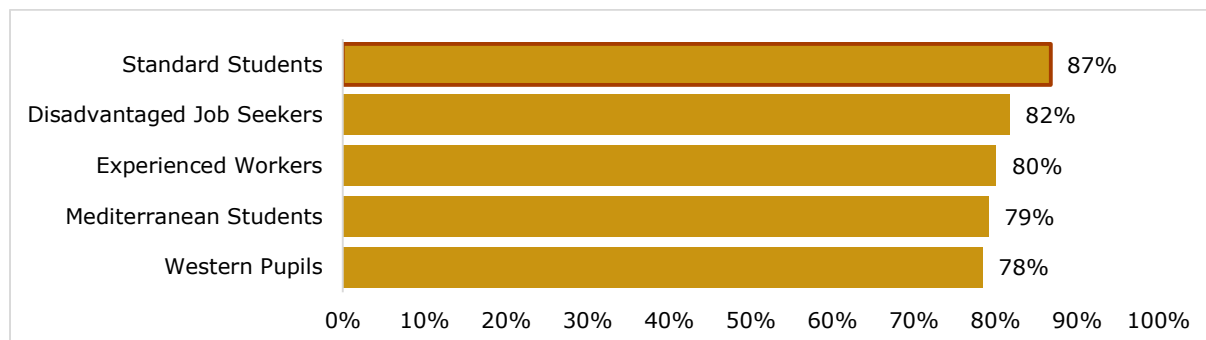
In line with this, most participants confirm that EVS has a substantial impact on their **commitment to keep helping the community** (see Figure 4-12). This effect is slightly stronger for those participants who have recently finished their EVS experience than for the EVS alumni, for whom it is however still strong (75%). Standard students (87%) are significantly more committed to helping their community after the EVS experience than other volunteers' profiles.

Figure 4-36 Effect on commitment towards the community



Q: "What kind of advantages have you gained from your stay abroad?"
 Item: "I feel more committed to helping my community after EVS"
 Sum of answers "Agree" + "Somewhat agree"
 n = 4 543

Figure 4-37 Effect on the commitment towards community, by volunteers' profiles

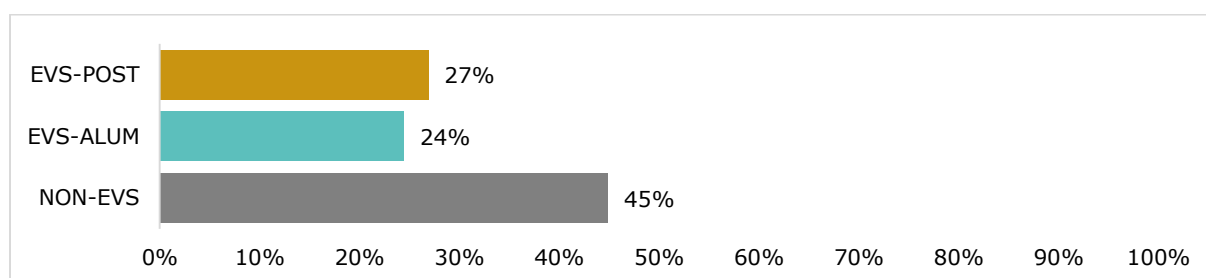


Q: "What kind of advantages have you gained from your stay abroad?"
 Item: "I feel more committed to helping my community after EVS"
 Sum of answers "Agree" + "Somewhat agree"
 n = 2 391

As a result, approximately a quarter of the EVS participants state that they **volunteer to a greater extent** in the community after their return, compared to before going abroad (see Figure 4-14). The comparison reveals that non-EVS volunteers are considerably more engaged (45%) after their previous volunteering experience than EVS volunteers but, as said before, their different starting situation is to be taken into account. While the majority of EVS participants were already active in volunteering before EVS (see Figure 3-9), it is expected that most of them stay would stay engaged to the same extent. In addition, for local volunteers it is easier to build on their work within their home communities, while those who return from abroad need to find new platforms and opportunities if they were not well integrated before.

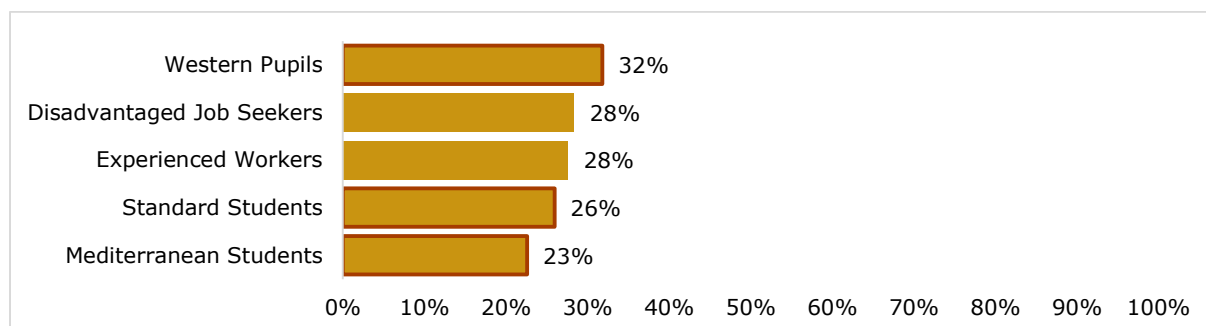
With regards to the differences among the five volunteer profiles, the effect is the largest for Western Pupils (32%) i.e. the youngest group with the least previous experience. On the other hand, Mediterranean students and standard students increase their volunteering after participation in the EVS significantly less compared to the other groups.

Figure 4-38 Increased volunteering after the EVS participation



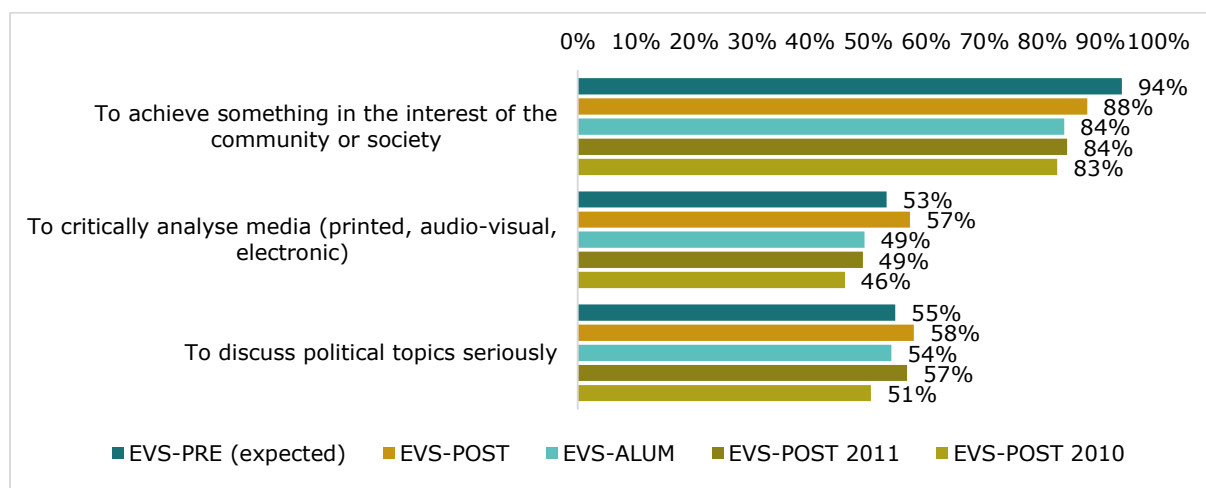
Q: "After taking part in EVS, I now volunteer in the community..." (EVS-POST, EVS-ALUM) and "After taking part in the volunteering, I now volunteer in the community..." (NON-EVS)
 Answer "To a greater extent"
 n = 4 354

Figure 4-39 Increased volunteering after the EVS participation, by volunteers' profiles



Q: "After taking part in EVS, I now volunteer in the community..."
 Answer "To a greater extent"
 n = 2 273

Figure 4-40 Effect on learning regarding community, political issues and media



Q: "Through my participation in EVS, I expect to learn better:" (EVS-PRE) and "Through my participation in EVS, I learned better:" (EVS-POST, EVS-ALUM)
 Selected items
 Sum of answers "Definitely"+ "To some extent"
 n = 5 945

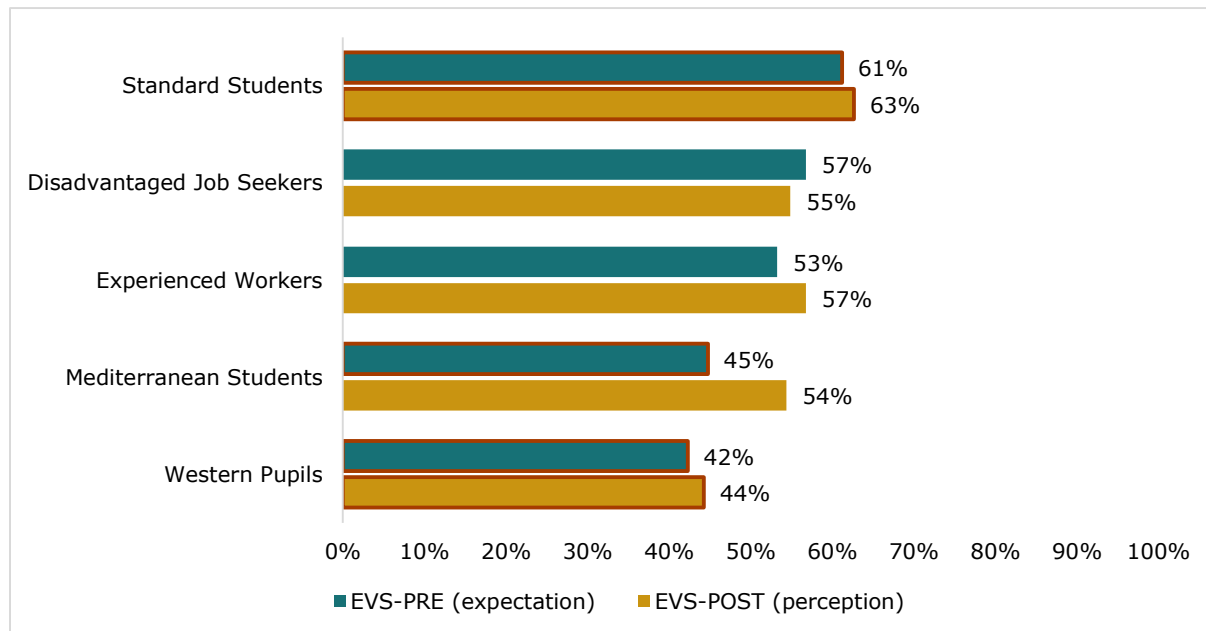
In the survey, volunteers were also asked about how their **competence related to social and political participation** develops through the EVS. Before going abroad, over 90% of EVS volunteers expect to learn how to achieve something for society – almost the same share actually confirms this benefit upon their return (see Figure 4-16).

However, the responses to two other questions are not equally unanimous. Only about half of the surveyed volunteers expect and experience an improvement in their ability to reflect critically on media and discuss political topics. Thus, these topics do not seem to be at the very core of the EVS activities, as work with individual clients and target groups such as children, youth or elderly are more frequently the themes on which EVS volunteers work (see chapter 3 above). In both cases, these results are similar to the conclusions of the EVS evaluation conducted in 2010 and 2011.

Statistically significant differences among the volunteers' profiles were measured in the case of the learning to critically analyse media (see Figure 4-17). The proportion of standard students who expect and perceive the effect on this ability is significantly higher (over 60% agree) than that of the other groups. On the other hand, Mediterranean

students and Western pupils expect significantly less frequently the EVS to have impact in this aspect.

Figure 4-41 Effect on the ability to critically analyse media, by volunteers' profiles



Q: "Through my participation in EVS, I expect to learn better:" (EVS-PRE) and "Through my participation in EVS, I learned better:" (EVS-POST, EVS-ALUM)
Item "to critically analyse media (printed, audio-visual, electronic)"
Sum of answers "Definitely"+ "To some extent"
n = 3 949

The case study interviews provided a number of positive examples of those individuals who are even more engaged in volunteering after EVS. Several project managers gave

"When I returned from EVS, I realised that what I want to do is to work in an association that allows me to do something meaningful for young people...I then decided to leave my job at booking.com and to go work for AFEV, the association where I had previously done my civic service. In the future, I plan to develop a youth project with my host organisation in Turkey". **EVS volunteer in TK, 2014-2015**

concrete examples of a number of volunteers who, upon their return from EVS, committed themselves to promote volunteering and continued being engaged in the civil society organisations. Some EVS participants have **continued as volunteers in their local organisations in the home community**. For example, in France, one volunteer reported that EVS helped her discover the option of a career in the third sector. As a result, she left her job to go work for the association where she had previously done her civic service before doing her EVS. Similarly, in Romania, Team for Youth (a receiving, sending and coordinating

organisation) expressed that some Romanian volunteers who went on EVS started working for the National Agency, or even for Team for Youth, upon their return. The organisation offers returning volunteers the opportunities to remain involved. For example, one volunteer who carried out her EVS in Spain was employed upon her return as an EVS Project Coordinator at Team for Youth. Another ex-EVS volunteer is now responsible for managing the local volunteers of the NGO, as well as managing the sending of volunteers through EVS. Additionally, other ex-EVS volunteers became involved as mentors of EVS volunteers upon their return from their mobility. These findings were reinforced by participants in the stakeholder seminar, who reported that a

factor which influences the EVS impact on volunteers is having an opportunity, or even requirement, to volunteer when they return to their home community.⁷²

Motivated by their positive experience in EVS, some volunteers **continue volunteering abroad** after completion of their EVS. For example, upon return from EVS, one volunteer from Greece went to Iceland to volunteer for an NGO that focuses on travelling. While not connected to the topic of his EVS project, the motivation to continue volunteering abroad was stimulated, in his view, by the experience he had of living abroad during EVS. Likewise, an ex-EVS volunteer from Turkey who did his EVS in Romania reported that the experience reinforced his motivation to continue volunteering. Therefore, he now wishes to do a long-term EVS in Poland after his graduation.

Euroacción, an EVS receiving organisation in Spain, reported that some young people who had completed a higher education programme decided to enroll in another programme, related to the activities they developed as volunteers. Additionally, other EVS participants decided to continue as volunteers in other projects, and to also continue improving their foreign language skills. It was even reported that several volunteers found a job either at Euroacción, at one of the associations it cooperates with, or at other entities through the contacts they made during their stay.

"Some [volunteers] decide to continue with volunteering activities. Others have seen the importance of learning a foreign language, and look for other volunteering programmes to continue learning languages". **EVS project coordinator from a receiving organisation in ES, 2016-2017**

An ex-EVS volunteer who did his mobility in Serbia recognised that the added value in the long-term aspect of EVS is the ability to gain a broader picture about international volunteering. As well as this, he considered another positive aspect to be the access to the international network of organisations which usually is not available when participating in local volunteering. According to him, the network can be used and is useful after the EVS experience, for future training possibilities and even job opportunities.

For some volunteers, EVS confirmed their **motivation to contribute to building the community and the society at large**. For example, in the case of a volunteer from Serbia, she was motivated to return home and to start working for an international NGO SOS Children's Villages. The volunteer believes that her EVS experience and the language skills acquired and improved during EVS helped her become employed at this NGO. According to an EVS sending organisation in Serbia, a positive impact of EVS for young people is that they start thinking about the mobility and travelling, becoming more aware of international and political issues and discussing them. According to the organisation, it can be said that the EVS volunteers benefited from *'developing a culture of work in the NGO sector and its specific field of international volunteering'*.

EVS volunteers in Romania reported that EVS has taught them many things which they would not have otherwise been able to learn at home. In particular, transnational volunteering is unique in terms of making volunteers aware of socio-economic differences, and motivating them to help their home community. Moreover, a study by ECORYS (2011), reported that a significant number of EVS alumni (33%) reported an increased participation in social and political life after completing their EVS. According to the results of the evaluation study, four in ten ex-volunteers reported that they joined an international (16%) or national (23%) youth organisation after their EVS. At the EU level, it was found that 42% of volunteers reported to have voted in the 2009 European elections, compared to the EU average of 29% in the same age group. This can imply a greater engagement in politics by EVS volunteers, compared to their peers.

⁷² This was expressed in the stakeholder seminar.

Individual volunteer story: Romania

A. is a 23 year-old Portuguese woman who is currently doing a 12 month EVS placement in Baia Mare, Romania. A. holds a Bachelor Degree in Portuguese Sign Language and has previously volunteered in a mental health home in Lisbon. She was motivated to do volunteering in another country because she wanted to help other communities, whilst at the same time trying new experiences to develop herself. She found out about EVS through an online blog of a young person who had previously done volunteer work, and applied for several EVS projects before being selected as a volunteer for Team for Youth in Romania. During her EVS A. has been involved in a variety of activities, which have included supporting English classes in a school and kindergarten through non-formal learning, as well as speaking with young people in a high school about future career options. A. has also provided support to other associations in town, such as those that work with children with Down's syndrome.

Just three months into her EVS, A. feels that she has already learned and developed a lot. Before EVS, she was not comfortable with speaking in front of an audience, but now **she already feels much more comfortable speaking in front of a class**. A. has also learned to work with children, to use non-formal learning methods, and to adapt these activities to different age groups. In addition to this, **A. reported to have improved her English language skills and to have learned some Romanian** as a result of her participation in EVS so far. Both A. and her family can already notice changes in her personality as a result of the EVS experience. She has become more patient with others around her. She is now also **more determined to contribute to meaningful, positive changes in the local community**. A. reported: *'My family said that my personality is now different, that I know better what I want and that I am more determined. I tend to agree. I left my comfort zone and I can now see other realities and think more for myself on how to bring about change to improve life in the community in general.'*

One of the things which A. has valued the most is the **variety of activities** that she has taken part in and learned from, which made it possible for her to interact with many different people and to be exposed to new fields of work that could help her decide what career path to take in the future. She reported: *'In EVS, I can try different activities...such as teaching. I can have different experiences and learn what I would like to do in the future, perhaps pursuing a Master's Degree in a different area that I like thanks to discovering it in EVS'*. In addition to this, A. highly valued the opportunity to **volunteer in a country which was previously unknown to her**, as well as the financial support she received without which she would not otherwise have been able to volunteer abroad. Additionally, the Portuguese **volunteer already feels 'more European'** as a result of meeting people from different countries and learning about other cultures. In particular, A. has learned a lot about life in Romania - she explained, *'by coming here through EVS, I have broken all of my stereotypes. There are cultural differences, but I see them as an opportunity to learn to do things in a different way'*. For A., using the EVS experience to obtain employment is not her main goal, but **she is certain that the experience will help her gain more job opportunities** in the future as companies increasingly value job applicants with experience of social activities and volunteering.

Individual volunteer story: France

L. is a young French man who is certified in working with children through games and non-formal learning activities (known as 'animateur' in France). At the age of 22, he went on EVS to Bosnia-Herzegovina for six months⁷³. As a passionate sociologist, a field in which he holds Bachelor's and Master's degrees, L. was interested to go abroad to discover different cultures. During university, he went on Erasmus to Ireland and after finishing his Bachelor studies, L. wanted to take a gap year. He heard from friends about the EVS projects promoted by ADICE; this organisation later helped him find his EVS placement.

L. had an atypical EVS experience since he was the only foreigner and young person in the small village of his placement and was the first ever EVS volunteer hosted by the receiving organisation. This meant he was involved in all the different projects run by the organisation. At the beginning, due to the lack of local language skills, he did manual work to help farmers sell their products, but later created a project with animation for children, involving team games and non-formal learning activities. However, his main project was to develop a tourism plan for the village, which included, among others, building a hostel. L. reported that all tasks and activities he carried out during EVS helped to **improve his professional skills**. For example, he learned a new technical skill of how to develop tourism plans. L. also **gained linguistic skills by learning to speak Bosnian** from direct interactions with local farmers and children. He also made new contacts with EVS volunteers that he met during SALTO training courses and is still in contact with them. L. is convinced that **EVS influenced his professional life**: *'Shortly after returning from EVS, I was proposed to work for two months as a consultant to implement a childcare project in Bosnia. This opportunity was only possible because I was fluent in Bosnian and because my host association recommended me for the job.'* Thanks to EVS, L. **learned about how NGOs work**. As a result, he **discovered that he wants to work for a non-profit association** as that is where he feels that he can do meaningful work for the benefit of many people. With this strong motivation, L. recently **obtained a job at ADICE, the organisation that had sent him on EVS**. According to L., *'my job at ADICE is the best outcome from my EVS. I am in charge of managing the communication of the organisation, which includes promoting EVS to young people outside of the organisation [...] I lead some modules of the pre-departure training for the outgoing EVS volunteers [...] I got the job because I want to be an ambassador for EVS and help other young people to go abroad'*. When it comes to the home local community, L. has **continued motivating other youth to go on EVS** and he got the job at ADICE for this exact purpose.

Participating in EVS also **increased L.'s European awareness** and gave him a sense of responsibility. L. discovered his passion for Europe during his first mobility through Erasmus, but admitted that during EVS, he reflected more about its meaning and engaged more deeply to build his European awareness. L. felt more accountable to fulfil his responsibility as an EU citizen: *'in EVS I knew that I was sent there by Europe to do something with, and for, other people from Europe. I felt more responsible than in Erasmus, like I had a debt towards Europe to represent the EU in Bosnia'*. L. most valued the SALTO training seminars which were organised on arrival and at mid-term. These **offered a space to meet EVS volunteers from other countries** in the region, which made it possible to share similar experiences and difficulties, and they provided an opportunity to have debates about the present and future of Europe - *'They helped me build European awareness and motivation to get*

⁷³ The mobility was supposed to last 9 months, but he had to return earlier due to an injury in an accident in the mountains.

more engaged with Europe’.

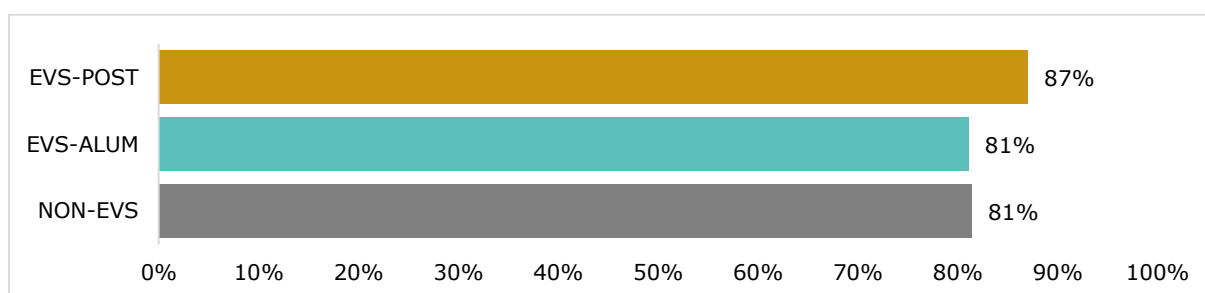
4.1.3 Improved social inclusion and solidarity

A third important dimension of the EVS individual impact is on the social inclusion and solidarity. We analyse whether EVS volunteers feel that the EVS experience increases both their awareness of social and global issues and their commitment to support the inclusion of the disadvantaged in society, including the interest to work against discrimination, racism and intolerance. Since the topics related to social exclusion are core themes of the EVS, we expected substantial impact in this dimension and indeed the evidence confirm this.

Through EVS, most volunteers gain a better understanding of the problems faced by certain groups of people in society and become more committed to help them. In the survey, 87% of the freshly returned EVS volunteers and 81% of the alumni maintain that they feel more aware of the issues of inclusion of people with fewer opportunities. Among the groups of EVS volunteers, the result is significantly stronger for the Standard Students and significantly weaker for Mediterranean Students than for other groups. However, even in this group 83% agree with the statement.

Among the control group of non-EVS volunteers, the percentage is smaller than among the EVS volunteers who just returned from their stay abroad, indicating that EVS might have more impact, and equivalent to that of EVS alumni. So it seems that for some EVS participants, the effect wears off over time.

Figure 4-42 Share of volunteers who feel more aware of inclusion of people with fewer opportunities after their volunteering experience



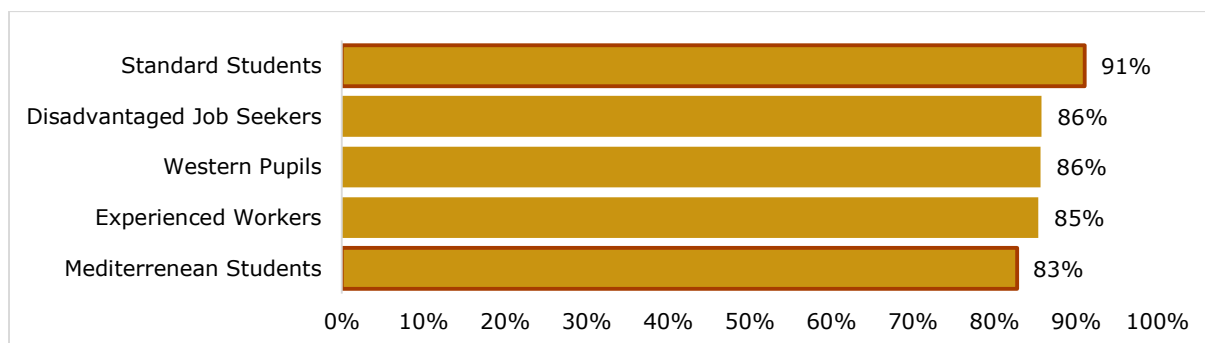
Q: "What kind of advantages have you gained from your stay abroad?" Item: „I feel more aware of the inclusion of people with fewer opportunities after EVS" (EVS-POST, EVS-ALUM)

Q: "What kind of advantages have you gained from your volunteering experience?" Item: „I feel more aware of the inclusion of people with fewer opportunities in volunteering" (NON-EVS)

Sum of answers "Agree" + "Somewhat agree"
n = 4 632

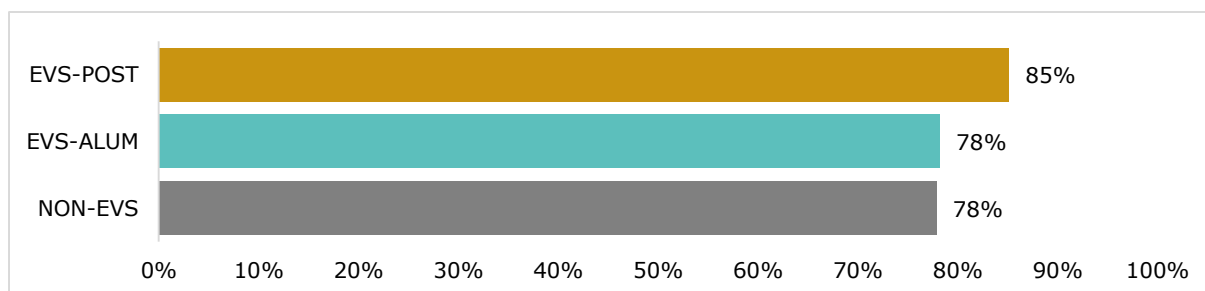
The majority of volunteers also think that the volunteering experience stimulates their commitment to the inclusion of people with fewer opportunities. The results are only slightly lower than in the previous case. Again, the proportion of Standard Students who agree to this statement is significantly higher than that of any other profile of post-return EVS volunteers, while Western Pupils and Mediterranean students show the lowest results. Also, the non-EVS volunteers again show lower levels of agreement than EVS-POST, but the same as the EVS alumni.

Figure 4-43 Share of volunteers who feel more aware of inclusion of people with fewer opportunities after EVS, by volunteers' profile⁷⁴



Q: "What kind of advantages have you gained from your stay abroad?" Item: „I feel more aware of the inclusion of people with fewer opportunities after EVS"
Sum of answers "Agree" + "Somewhat agree"
n = 2 390

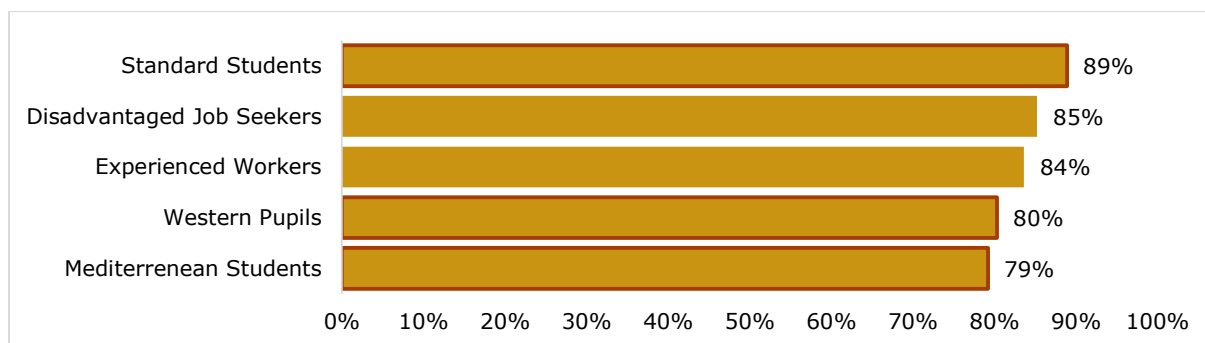
Figure 4-44 Share of volunteers who feel more committed to the inclusion of people with fewer opportunities after EVS



Q: "What kind of advantages have you gained from your stay abroad?" Item: „I feel more committed to the inclusion of people with fewer opportunities after EVS" (EVS-POST, EVS-ALUM)
Q: "What kind of advantages have you gained from your volunteering experience?" Item: „I feel more committed to the inclusion of people with fewer opportunities in volunteering" (NON-EVS)
Sum of answers "Agree" + "Somewhat agree"
n = 4 625

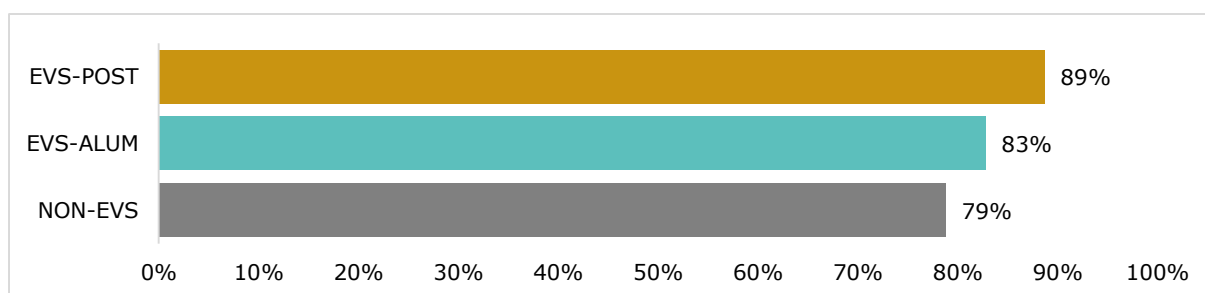
⁷⁴ Statistical significance has been calculated for the volunteers' profiles, indicating for each one of them whether it is different from its complement (all other profiles mixed together). Where a significant difference was found, the respective bar is outlined in red in the chart.

Figure 4-45 Share of volunteers who feel more committed to the inclusion of people with fewer opportunities after EVS, by volunteers' profile



Q: "What kind of advantages have you gained from your stay abroad?" Item: „I feel more committed to the inclusion of people with fewer opportunities after EVS"
Sum of answers "Agree" + "Somewhat agree"
n = 2 384

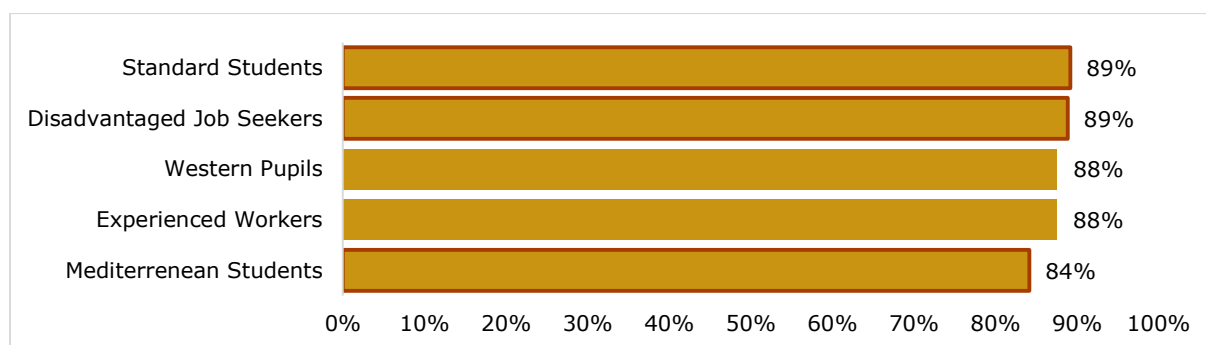
Figure 4-46 Share of volunteers who feel more committed to working against the discrimination



Q: "What kind of advantages have you gained from your stay abroad?" Item: „I feel more committed to working against discrimination" (EVS-POST, EVS-ALUM)
Q: "What kind of advantages have you gained from your volunteering experience?" Item: „I feel more committed to working against discrimination" (NON-EVS)
Sum of answers "Agree" + "Somewhat agree"
n = 4 633

Moreover, 89% of EVS volunteers close to the end of their stay declare that they are now more committed to work against the discrimination in the society, with the largest shares among Standard Students and Disadvantaged Job Seekers, while the Mediterranean Students show statistically less significant hesitance. Furthermore, 83% of EVS alumni agree with the statement, compare to slightly less (79%) of non-EVS volunteers.

Figure 4-47 Share of volunteers who feel more committed to working against discrimination, by volunteers' profile



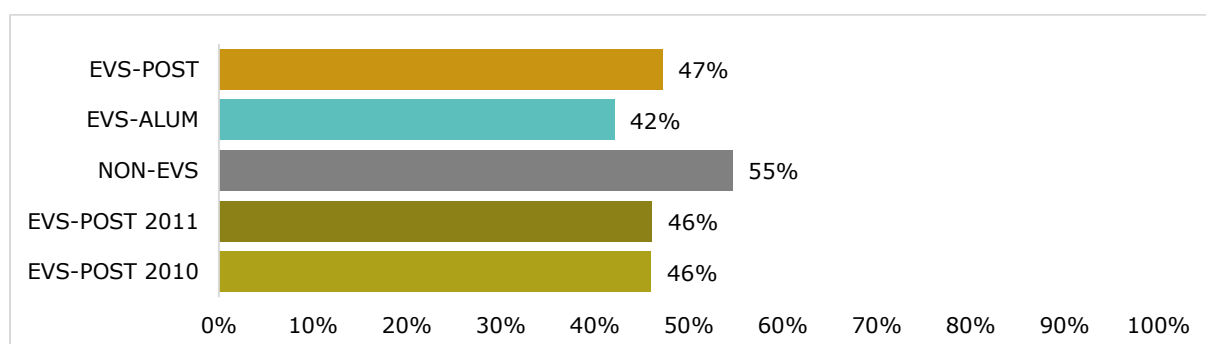
Q: "What kind of advantages have you gained from your stay abroad?" Item: „I feel more committed to working against discrimination"
Sum of answers "Agree" + "Somewhat agree"
n = 2 391

In a similar question, 47% of post-return volunteers declare that now, after the volunteering experience, they are committed to work against discrimination, intolerance, xenophobia or racism "to a greater extent" than before. Almost all the other respondents consider themselves committed "to the same extent", while only very few people declare they are committed to a smaller extent than before taking part in the EVS.

The proportion of EVS volunteers committed "to a greater extent" is lower than average among the Western Pupils, Mediterranean Students and EVS alumni. In contrast, among the control group of non-EVS volunteers more than half of the respondents agree, one of the few cases in which this group shows higher levels of agreement than EVS groups.

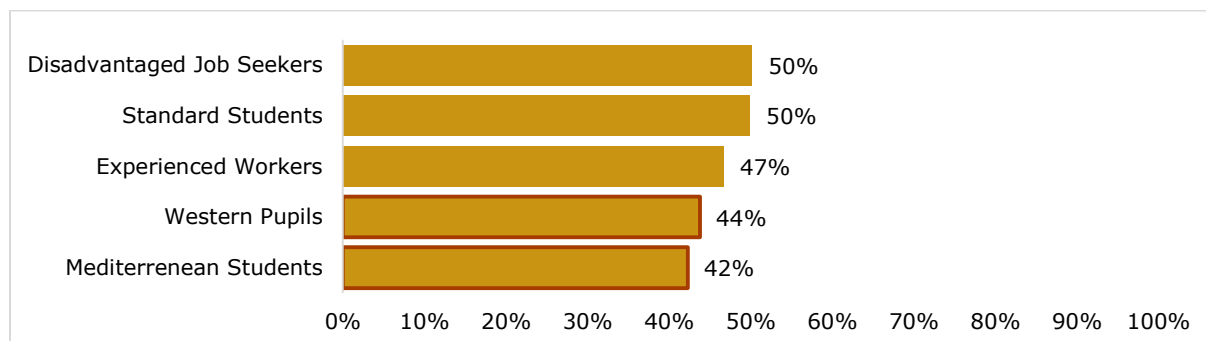
The same question was asked in a survey of post-return EVS participants in 2010 and 2011, with almost the same result as in this study thus confirming the findings. This also shows that the impact of EVS in this area did not change over the last few years.

Figure 4-48 Share of volunteers who feel committed to work against discrimination, intolerance, xenophobia or racism to a greater extent after their volunteering experience



Q: "After taking part in EVS, I am now committed to work against discrimination, intolerance, xenophobia or racism..." (EVS-POST, EVS-ALUM)
Q: "After taking part in the volunteering, I am now committed to work against discrimination, intolerance, xenophobia or racism..." (NON-EVS)
Answer "To a greater extent"
n = 4 341

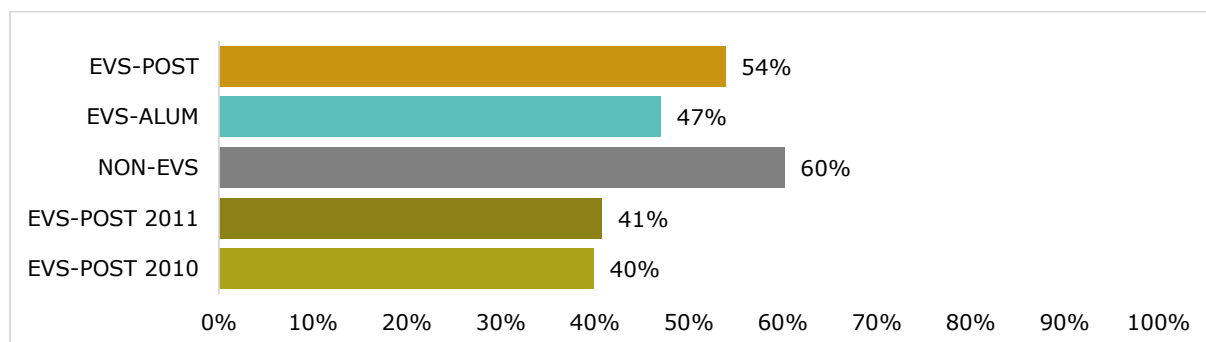
Figure 4-49 Share of volunteers who feel committed to work against discrimination, intolerance, xenophobia or racism to a greater extent after their volunteering experience, by volunteers' profile



Q: "After taking part in EVS, I am now committed to work against discrimination, intolerance, xenophobia or racism..."
 Answer "To a greater extent"
 n = 2 264

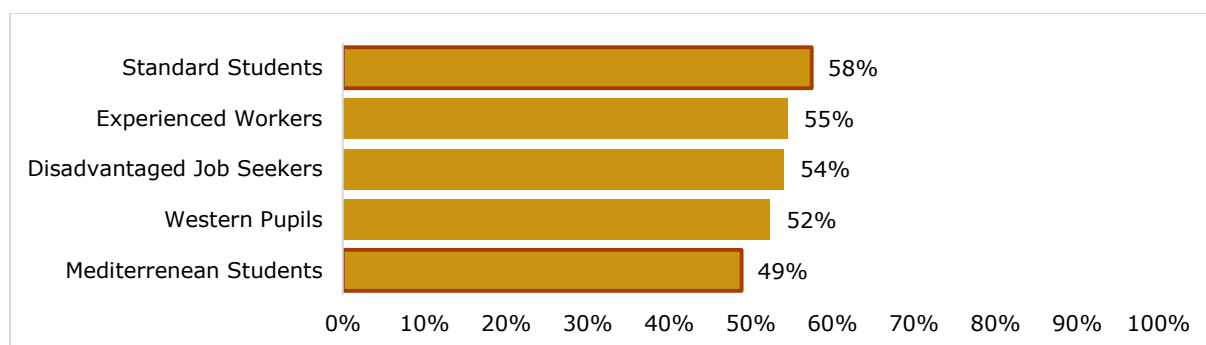
In line with the previous question, 54% of EVS volunteers - right after their EVS experience - declare to be committed "to a greater extent" to help the disadvantaged people in society. The share is significantly higher for Standard Students and lower for Mediterranean Students. Also, after some time this declines as the majority of EVS alumni consider their commitment to be the same as before the EVS. As in the previous case, non-EVS volunteers assign a larger effect to their experience than the EVS participants do, as 60% of them believe that they are now more committed than before. However, in the 2010 and 2011 evaluation only about 40% of post-return EVS volunteers agreed with the statement. Thus, a substantial improvement can be observed in this case.

Figure 4-50 Share of volunteers who feel more committed to help the disadvantaged people in society to a greater extent after their volunteering experience



Q: "After taking part in EVS, I am more committed to help the disadvantaged people in society..." (EVS-POST, EVS-ALUM)
 Q: "After taking part in the volunteering, I am more committed to help the disadvantaged people in society..." (NON-EVS)
 Answer "To a greater extent"
 n = 4 357

Figure 4-51 Share of volunteers who feel more committed to help the disadvantaged people in society to a greater extent after their volunteering experience, by volunteers' profile



Q: "After taking part in EVS, I am more committed to help the disadvantaged people in society..."
 Answer "To a greater extent"
 n = 2 275

To sum up, taking into account that enthusiasm about the social inclusion is expected from EVS volunteers even before they depart, the impacts of EVS here indeed are positive. The vast majority of EVS volunteers feel that the EVS experience made them more aware of the social issues such as exclusion and discrimination and inspired their solidarity with the disadvantaged groups in the society. As many were already active in this area before embarking on EVS, it is not surprising that only about a half of them consider themselves being more committed to action, while the other half considers itself committed about the same as before the EVS.

Among the individual groups of post-return EVS volunteers, the impacts are the largest for Standard Students and the smallest for the Mediterranean Students. In almost all cases, the results of these two groups are significantly different from the rest.

In all aspects, it seems that time has a moderating effect because EVS alumni are more cautious in evaluating the impact EVS had on them, although still the vast majority of them perceive a positive impact.

When comparing the impacts on EVS volunteers to the control group of non-EVS volunteers, local experience seems to be equally or even more effective in relation to the commitment to social inclusion. This might seem counter-intuitive, but for the majority of EVS volunteers, EVS is not their first volunteering experience (see Figure 3-9). However, if that is the case, then it is quite remarkable that still – depending on the aspect – around a half of the EVS volunteers increase their commitment.

The literature review also supports this finding as several studies have shown that by volunteering, young people broaden their outlook on the world and increase their awareness of social issues (Beames, 2003; Anderson, 2007; Hamilton & Fenzel, 1988; IPPR, 2009).

While this was an important impact also identified in some case studies, it was not a finding shared across many individual volunteers and organisations. Only three volunteers (in Italy, Portugal and Romania) and one organisation (in the UK) reported this impact on volunteers. For some of the alumni interviewed, EVS was their first experience of work with disadvantaged groups and thus had a strong impact on their social awareness. For example, in the UK, several volunteers reported that their EVS had changed their perception of people with learning disabilities and made them more open towards this target group as a result of

"They [EVS volunteers] start to act more as part of the solution in Europe. For instance they learned a lot about the situation in Syria and of the situation of refugees that came to Turkey. This situation raised their awareness about the solidarity and social inclusion issues in Europe" **EVS project leader (TOG), TK, 2016**

their work in EVS. One of the volunteers mentioned that they had previously had some stereotypes about individuals with learning difficulties, but that these had changed as a result of her volunteering experience through EVS.

The case studies did reveal that **EVS participants with a previous rich volunteering experience also gain from the EVS in terms of broadening and deepening their social awareness.** For example, an ex-EVS volunteer from Turkey, who did his mobility in Romania, reported that the EVS experience made him more aware of social disadvantages, and made him more willing to help people. Prior to EVS, the volunteer had a vast experience of voluntary work in his home town. Similarly, a volunteer who did her EVS in Portugal reported gaining a better understanding of the complexity of the problems related to the social inclusion of Roma people as a result of EVS. She found that EVS enabled her to interact more intensely with the target group over a long period of time, which made her understand better the situation of Roma people and the difficulties in their community.

"Before EVS, I had worked with children with leukaemia, but I was avoiding working with homeless people or with Roma children. After EVS, I feel more comfortable working them as I know how to communicate with them, I understand them and I am used to talking to them". **EVS alumni from TK, who did EVS in RO, 2016**

In addition to improving their social awareness, EVS can

"The possibility to give and receive care and affection changed my outlook on life completely. Before EVS, I was very much concentrated on my own problems, but the EVS experience brought me in daily contact with people with problems different from my own and this helped put things into perspective. Such an experience would not have been the same if it had happened in my hometown" **EVS volunteer in IT, 2007**

have an impact on the attitudes and behaviours of volunteers by making them more responsible and committed to help the disadvantaged people. Many studies have shown that young participants in EVS generally feel more aware and more committed to support the inclusion of disadvantaged people in society after the completion of their EVS (Mieñkowska-Norkiene, 2011; RAY, 2014; RAY, 2012; European Commission, 2011b; ECORYS, 2007; SOS for EVS, 1999). An increased commitment to work against discrimination, racism and intolerance was also found in a majority of volunteers after their participation in EVS (ECORYS, 2011; ECORYS, 2007).

The interviewed volunteer in Italy experienced a considerable change in values as a result of providing assistance to people with disabilities during his EVS. The impact was so significant that he chose to dedicate his career to working with the disadvantaged and has been providing assistance to people with disabilities ever since, as an employee at the centre where he was previously hosted as an EVS volunteer.

4.1.4 Other areas of impact

Personal and social development

Here, we look at the increases in the self-confidence and other personality traits and assess whether EVS broadened the horizon of the participants, increased their autonomy and independence, helped them to learn about themselves and also enlarged their networks of friends and contacts abroad.

The impact of EVS on the personality is analysed through different methods. Firstly, we use the responses of the survey participants on how they perceive such effects. This is supplemented by the information obtained from case studies interviews. Secondly, we apply the psychometric memo[©] method as explained below which helps us to identify measurable objective effects which are independent from the individual perception of participants.

Effects perceived by participants

In general, **the volunteering experience is perceived highly positively since 96% of the current EVS volunteers, 97% of the alumni and 98% of the non-EVS volunteers agree that it contributes to their personal development.**

Moreover, the data gathered through the online surveys, literature and interviews with volunteers and host organisations confirm that EVS has a strong impact on developing participants' autonomy and independence.

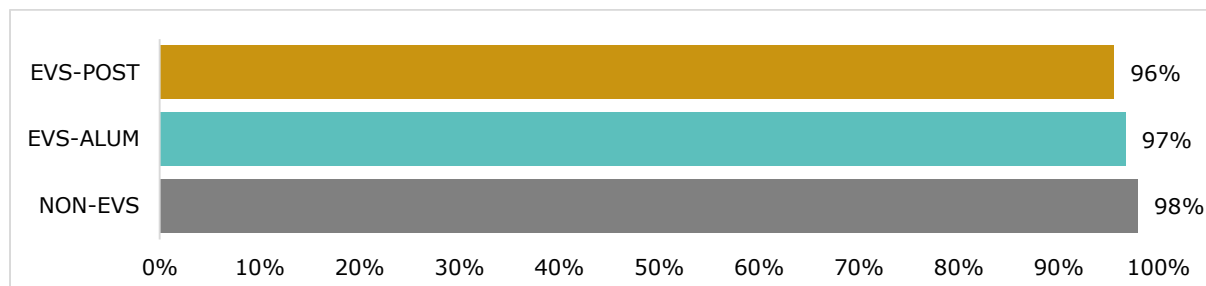
The majority of volunteers in the interviews stated that EVS was the first time they lived on their own without their parents and it was also the first time many participants share housing with people from other countries. Therefore, EVS enabled them to learn essential life skills,

"Living alone abroad always makes you feel more confident and grown-up – now I cook better! (...) I do not have children and have never had siblings, so I now feel more responsible for other children."
EVS volunteer in EE, 2017

such as managing their own finances, living on their own and being flexible when situations change. As a representative from Kohila Open Youth Centre (a receiving organisation in Estonia) reported, going on EVS and living independently is a chance for the volunteers to learn how to manage their budget and experience travelling on their own. Similarly, a representative from a receiving/sending organisation in Finland expressed how

volunteers, particularly younger ones, learn to manage their lives, such as learning to budget, manage finances and learning to prepare food. The representative stated how previously, volunteers might have relied on their parents for arranging travel, but they have now learned to be more autonomous and independent as a result of EVS. As a result, many volunteers move to live on their own when they return from EVS. Successfully overcoming daily difficulties shows volunteers that they are capable of accomplishing a variety of tasks without the help of their families. This is particularly relevant for young people with fewer opportunities who often take part first in a short-term EVS during which they develop their autonomy and gain a sense of responsibility, and are then motivated to sign up for a long-term EVS. Although in the online survey many respondents reported having previous experiences of mobility, even those stated that they feel to benefit personally from EVS.

Figure 4-52 General impact of EVS on the personal development and future



Q: "How would you assess your stay abroad in terms of profit for..." Item: "...your own personal development" (EVS-POST, EVS-ALUM)

Q: "How would you assess your volunteering experience in terms of profit for..." Item: "...your own personal development" (NON-EVS)
Sum of answers "Highly Profitable" + "Profitable"
n = 4 502

On average, over 90% of the EVS volunteers expect - prior to departure - that EVS will have a strong positive influence on their personality and 87% feel that

"Before EVS, I was unemployed and had no strict routines (...). The time spent as a volunteer helped boost my self-confidence. For example, I received praise for my work from my superiors, something I had not experienced previously and made me feel that my work was meaningful." EVS volunteer in IT, 1997-1998

EVS had a positive impact on their personality directly after the experience, confirmed by 85% of the alumni. They especially feel to have improved their confidence, curiosity, serenity and decisiveness. The awareness that one is able to surmount difficulties of living and working abroad increases confidence in one's own capacities and instils a sense of pride and achievement. In particular, when volunteers are given the opportunity to take on responsibility for some tasks, this makes them see their work as meaningful and

increases their self-confidence. For example, a Spanish volunteer who is currently doing her EVS in the Netherlands expressed that she feels she has benefitted from the EVS experience in terms of the work she has done – *'the thing that has changed the most in me is the feeling that I am more appreciated and valued'*. She explained that as a result of this she feels a greater sense of self-accomplishment. Similarly, an ex-EVS volunteer from Ukraine who did her EVS in Estonia reported that the most significant change she experienced as a result of EVS was being more confident in herself. The experience enabled her to trust herself more, and to not be afraid of implementing her own ideas and making mistakes.

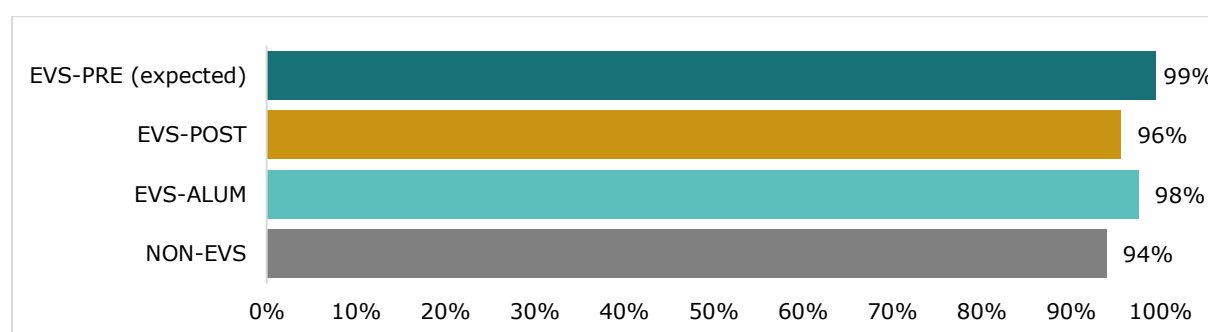
The literature review also found that the strongest result overall for the impact of voluntary service is contributing to volunteers' personal growth, with boosted self-confidence being the most frequently cited outcome (Boeck, 2009; ECORYS, 2014; European Commission, 2011b; Mieñkowska-Norkiene, 2011; SOS for EVS, 1999; European Commission, 2001). A 2010 survey conducted for the evaluation of the Youth in Action programme found that over 65% of the EVS participants surveyed reported significant increases in their self-esteem during their EVS.

The EVS also gives volunteers the opportunity to learn about themselves, discover their own interests and broaden their horizons. The vast majority of the EVS volunteers after return (96%) and the alumni (98%) state that they gained new insights about themselves and their abilities. As the case

"Before EVS, I did not have many chances to travel abroad. Through EVS, I learned to take risks, to take on new adventures and to try out new experiences that, before EVS, I thought I could not do. For example, after completing my EVS project, I returned to Serbia but came back to Portugal soon after to search for a job." EVS volunteer in PT, 2012-2013

interviews revealed, practical work experience as part of EVS helps young people become more aware of what they can do and how they can develop their talents. Being in a new environment and carrying out new tasks or activities makes volunteers comfortable with being outside of their comfort zone, and to think 'out of the box'. As a result of the EVS experience, many interviewed volunteers mentioned an increased willingness to take risks and better resilience to deal with obstacles in life. For example, some volunteers gained confidence to search for work or study opportunities abroad because they learnt to try out new experiences. A volunteer from Portugal who is currently doing her EVS in Spain believes that the experience is making her more open and willing to take risks, and it has also increased her sense of initiative. Another ex-EVS volunteer from Latvia, who did her EVS in Finland, expressed that doing volunteering abroad is associated with a greater risk than volunteering in one's home country, but that the potential for rewards is much greater. She explained that *'thinking outside the box is an essential skill for any volunteer in a foreign country'*.

Figure 4-53 Advantage of new insights from volunteering



Q: "What kind of advantages have you gained from your stay abroad?" Item: „ New insights about myself and my abilities" (EVS-PRE, EVS-POST, EVS-ALUM)

Q: "What kind of advantages have you gained from your volunteering experience?" Item: "New insights about myself and my abilities" (NON-EVS)
Sum of answers "Agree" + "Somewhat agree"
n = 6334

EVS was found to also foster participants' social capital. The opportunity to meet

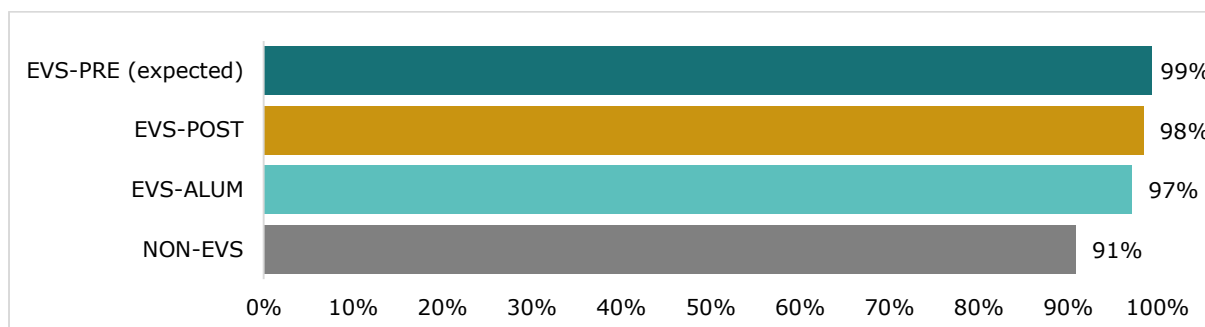
"I made many new friends from different European countries, from among EVS volunteer peers as well as Turkish local people. I am still in contact with many of the friends I made during EVS, some of whom I will meet again during our EVS reunion in Italy this year." **EVS volunteer in TK, 2014-2015**

new people and make friends was a benefit frequently mentioned by volunteers in interviews. 98% of the survey respondents state that they expect and indeed made new friends abroad. Among the alumni, 97% have friends who live abroad and 94% - and this was confirmed in the interviews as well - still keep in contact with friends they had met during the volunteering period, both peer volunteers and local people (staff of the organisation and other local young people). Some stay in contact many years after completing their EVS and organise yearly

reunions. This was the case for an ex-EVS volunteer who did her EVS in Finland. She reported that the friends she made during EVS have had a big impact in her life. She formed lifelong friendships with the two other EVS volunteers. Even though the three came from completely different backgrounds and countries, the friendship has lasted and they still meet up on regular basis, even though it has been nearly a decade from their time together in Finland and even if they come from different countries around Europe. This was also reported by a representative from a receiving/sending organization in Finland, who stated that volunteers really value the friendships and mentoring relationships they build during their EVS. Many friendships formed between EVS volunteers are long-lasting friendships and the staff at the organisation are fully aware

that the volunteers stay in touch with one and another for years. Many volunteers also form friendships with the youth they mentor during their time at youth clubs and many are in regular contact with staff from the organisation too.

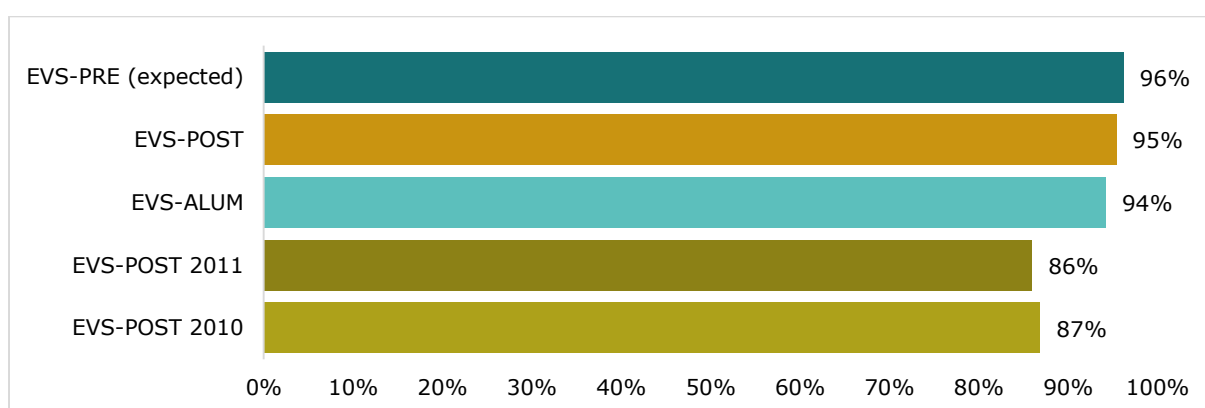
Figure 4-54 International contacts gained from the volunteering



Q: "What kind of advantages have you gained from your stay abroad?" Item: „ I expect to have new friends who live abroad." (EVS-PRE, EVS-POST, EVS-ALUM)
 Q: "What kind of advantages have you gained from your volunteering experience?" Item: „ I expect to have new friends who live abroad." (NON-EVS)
 Sum of answers "Agree" + "Somewhat agree"
 n = 3951

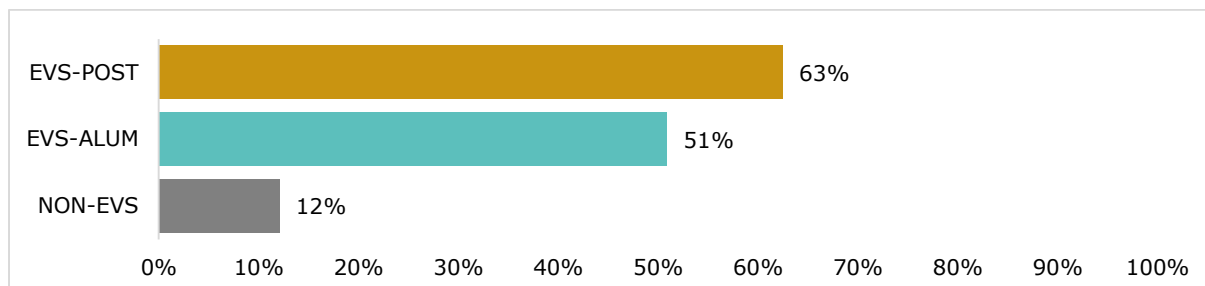
EVS is also supporting an international attitude towards relationships. Nearly all the EVS participants learn to get to know people from other countries. This is confirmed by 98% of the EVS volunteers who have new friends living abroad after EVS. EVS also strongly influences the very personal relationships of the volunteers. From the post-return EVS volunteers, 45% state that they met their partner while volunteering abroad and 63% have a partner with a different nationality, five times more than among non-EVS volunteers (12%). This share is lower amongst the alumni, where only every second respondent (51%) has a partner with a different nationality. The vast majority (81%) also learned to see the value of different kinds of arts and culture.

Figure 4-55 Learning to get to know people from other countries



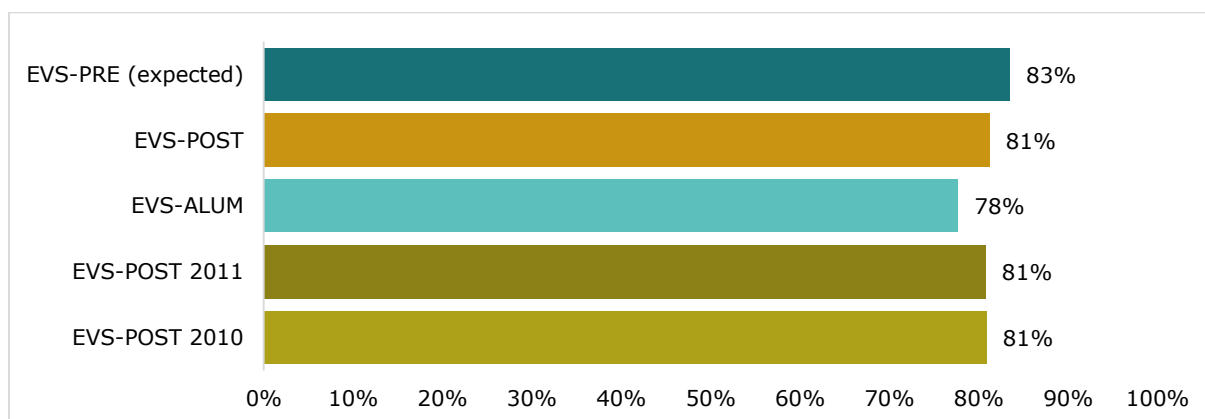
Q: "Through my participation in EVS, I learned better:" Item: „ to get to know people from other countries with whom I am still in touch" (EVS-PRE, EVS-POST, EVS-ALUM, EVS-POST 2011, EVS-POST 2010)
 Sum of answers "Definitely" + "To some extent"
 n = 5912

Figure 4-56 Personal relationships and EVS



Q: "If you are currently in a relationship, does your partner have the same nationality as you?"
 Answer = No
 n = 2479

Figure 4-57 Learning to see the value of different kinds of arts and culture



Q: "Through my participation in EVS, I learned better:" Item: „ to see the value of different kinds of arts and culture" (EVS-PRE, EVS-POST, EVS-ALUM, EVS-POST 2011, EVS-POST 2010)
 Sum of answers "Definitely" + "To some extent"
 n = 5 911

While all these findings are based on personal perceptions of the individuals, either as stated in the online survey or the interviews, there is also evidence related particularly to the personality traits which was generated using the memo[®] methodology of CHE Consult.

Effects measured by memo[®]

Brief explanation of the memo[®] methodology⁷⁵

Memo[®] is a psychometric method measuring the **impact of international mobility experience on the development of personality traits of the participants**. It works on the basic assumption that it is insufficient to ask for participants' self-perceptions in order to learn whether a mobility experience has had the desired effect. It is rather necessary to test how people behave and how their personalities and mind-sets change.

In order to achieve this, the online surveys for EVS volunteers and alumni, as well as non-mobile volunteers, contain a set of psychometric items related to six specific memo[®] factors describing the most important personality traits related to employability (please see below). It is therefore possible to assess the **direct outcomes of the EVS mobility experience on the personality development** and compare the **short-term *ex ante* to *ex post* effects** measured among volunteers directly after the EVS experience, as well as the **long-term effects** measured among EVS alumni.

Memo[®] has the advantage that responses to items are not biased by e.g. socially desired answer patterns, as respondents do not know which item relates to which factor and which type of answer is preferable. This objectivity has been tested for years and is to be considered stable. Memo[®] originally consists of ten factors. For the Erasmus Impact Study and subsequently EVS study, the following six factors with the closest relationship to employability were selected.

Confidence: High values of this factor point to a high degree of self-sufficiency and a strong conviction regarding one's own ability - aspects that may positively impact professional success. Individuals with high values for this factor may, however, also be inflexible and set in their ways. Low values show doubt about one's own ability and perseverance, grounded, for instance, in negative experience or personal insecurity.

Curiosity: High values for this factor indicate that a person is not only open to new experiences, but actively seeks to broaden his experience. This also applies to new academic or professional challenges. Low values point to a much more reluctant attitude towards new experience and a greater appreciation of that which is familiar.

Decisiveness: High values point to an active and decisive individual, who may have a rather critical attitude towards others. Low values suggest that the individual is more likely to reconsider his or her decisions to accommodate the opinions of others.

Serenity: High values for this factor indicate that a person knows his or her strengths and weaknesses. This positive self-assessment not only leads to a more relaxed relationship with other individuals or new demands, but might also help to prevent disappointments. Low values, on the other hand, suggest a much higher stress level that can be caused by a misjudgement of one's own abilities, accompanied by difficulty in understanding the given demands and requirements.

Tolerance of Ambiguity: High values for this factor mean that a person is capable of tolerating the behaviour and values of other individuals without compromising his or her own values. This is also closely related to adaptability, as individuals with a high level of tolerance of ambiguity can adapt much more easily to new situations. Low values mean that a person feels very uncomfortable if confronted with different

⁷⁵ memo[®] is a unique methodology developed and owned by CHE Consult GmbH

values and ways of life of other people. Such individuals may espouse a more traditional view of things, based on their own perspective and experience, as influenced by family, society and established norms and values. Deviation from what is conceived as “normal” is perceived to be threatening or at least a cause of discomfort.

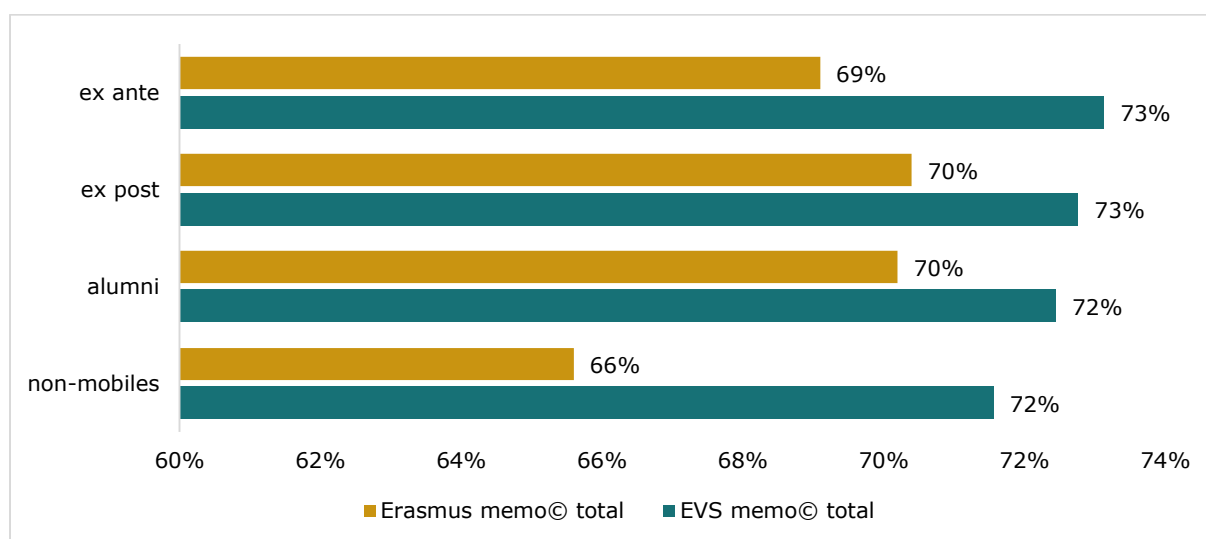
Vigour: High values reflect a “problem-solver” who does not like to delve into the unsolvable aspects of a task, but focuses on the doable, and also likes a challenge. Low values reflect an individual who is well aware of problems or problematic aspects of a situation and who might be more concerned with identifying the problem rather than solving it. Accordingly, such an individual would be less goal-oriented.

memo[®] total: The total value represents an average of all factors. It describes the overall level of personality development.

While we did not find any substantial differences between EVS and Erasmus students (as analysed in the Erasmus Impact Study EIS) on the perceptions of personal impact, we indeed see differences in the memo[®] values and therefore display here the results from both studies for comparison.

Using psychometric data from the online surveys, we measured the personality traits of EVS volunteers prior to a stay abroad and after return, and the personality traits of EVS alumni as well as non-mobile volunteers.

Figure 4-58 memo[®] total values by target groups and comparison with EIS

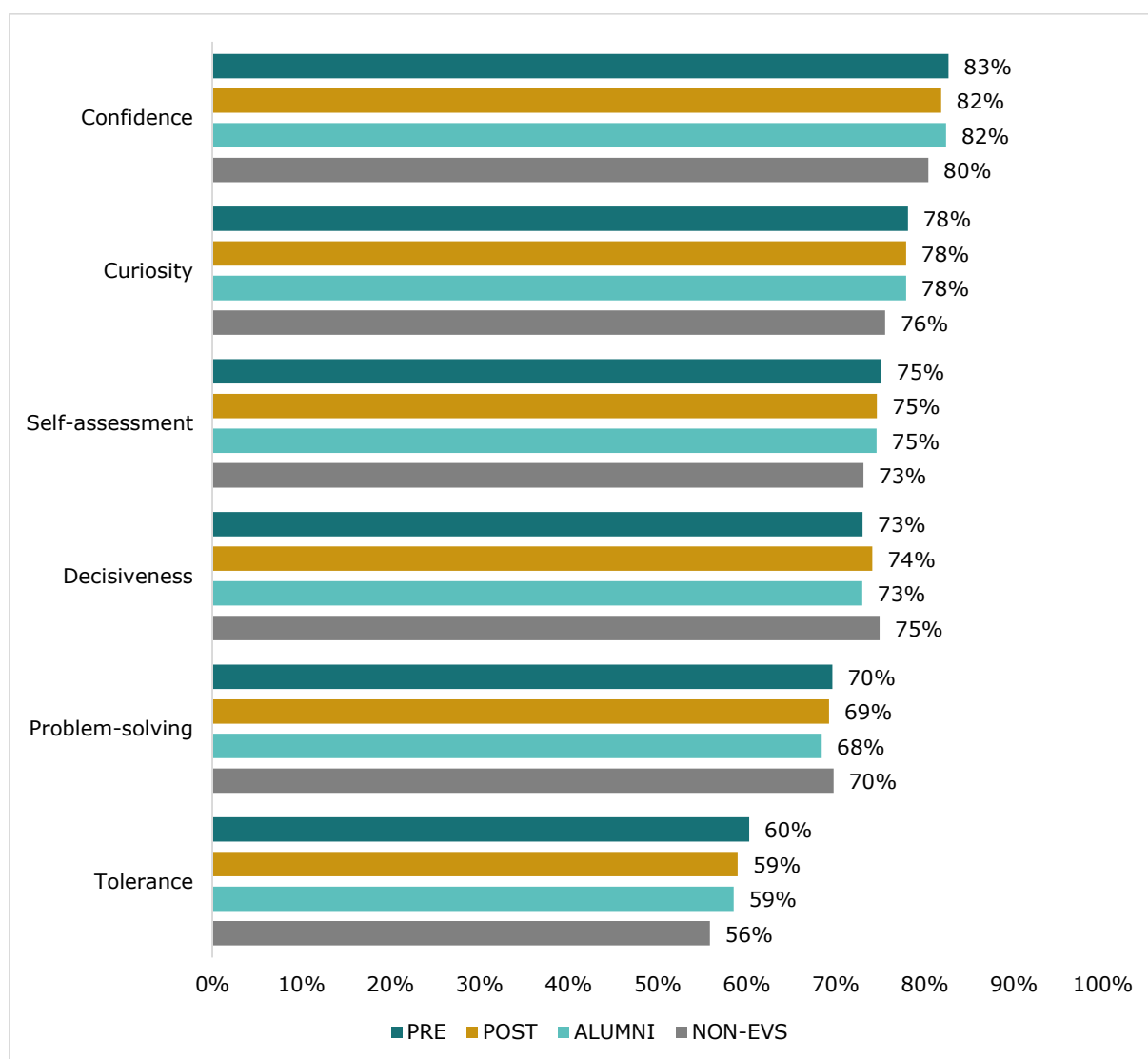


On average, EVS volunteers showed an *ex ante* memo[®] total value (personality traits values prior to an EVS stay abroad) of 73.2%. This means that the **EVS volunteers start their mobility with an already considerably high level of personality traits**. The starting level of EVS volunteers is higher than that of Erasmus students prior to departure (69.1%). This suggests that compared to Erasmus, **EVS attracts participants with rather advanced levels of personality**.

The reasons for this can be found in the profile of EVS volunteers. Over 90% of EVS volunteers had at least one, but often more, volunteering experiences before starting EVS. In fact, 34% of them had already been abroad for studies or internships prior to EVS. All these activities have supported their personality development to a large extent. This was proved also through the interviews for case studies where the majority of participants reported to have done volunteering or charity work prior to EVS. In addition,

EVS is highly selective and organisations have a wide pool of experienced applicants to select from for their EVS projects. Interviews with EVS organisations confirmed that they tend to select only the most motivated and experienced volunteers who match their projects and activities. Applicants with experience in the field of work of the organisation or in the NGO sector have higher chances to be selected for EVS projects. The selection process is even more competitive for applicants from non-EU countries, some of whom reported to have applied to two or more – even five – different EVS projects/organisations before being selected. Therefore, the **typical profile of an EVS volunteer already includes a very high level of personality traits, which effectively limits the change that can be produced through the EVS stay abroad.**

Figure 4-59 Impact of EVS on personality traits (memo[®] factor values)

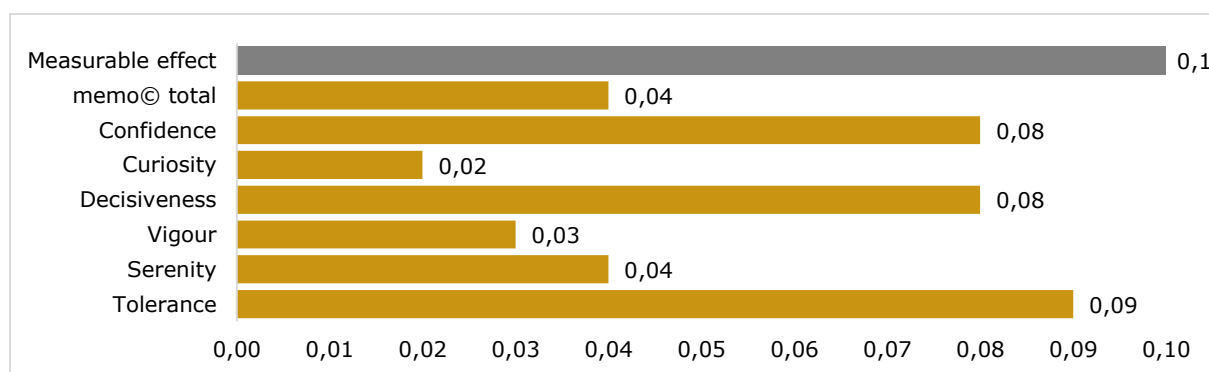


The *ex post* memo[®] total value for EVS volunteers (personality traits values after return from an EVS stay abroad) was on average 72.8%, which suggests a slight decrease in the level of personality traits. However, the size of the effect produced during the EVS experience did not reach the threshold for being considered measurable (see Figure 4-46). Therefore, differences in memo[®] values prior to and after EVS are too small and statistically irrelevant. The level of personality traits of EVS volunteers after the EVS mobility is still on average considerably higher than that of Erasmus students (70.4%).

Furthermore, we see that **EVS alumni also have substantially higher values than Erasmus alumni**, so obviously the personality advantage that they brought into the EVS experience more or less lasts over time, even if the value drops slightly after the experience. As with Erasmus, we also see that people later in life do not necessarily develop personality traits.

Moreover, non-EVS volunteers also have values similar to the Erasmus students after their experience abroad. This indicates that people engaging in volunteering are from the outset more developed in their personality than e.g. non-mobile students. In addition to this, **EVS volunteers even have somewhat higher values than non-EVS (and therefore non-mobile) volunteers**, an indication that indeed EVS is more selective than other volunteering.

Figure 4-60 Effect size measured by Cohen's d

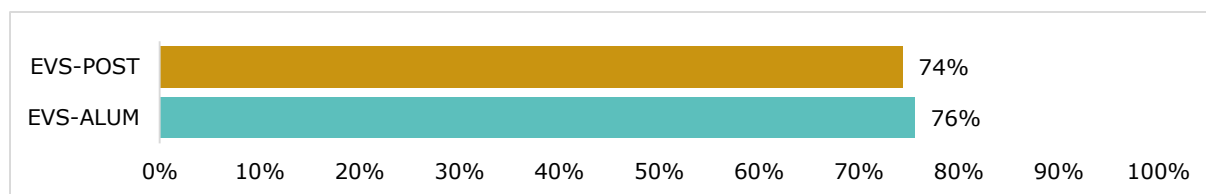


Learning and competence development

This impact dimension analyses the effects of EVS on the learning and competence development of the volunteers. This relates to the learning of foreign languages, the increase of key competences, the acquisition of new skills, an increase in awareness of non-formal learning and plans for further education.

The online survey, literature and interviews with EVS participants and staff of EVS organisations confirm that **EVS has an impact on the volunteers' learning and competence development**. In the online survey, three out of four respondents (current as well as alumni) state that EVS helped them to improve their inter-personal and social competences.

Figure 4-61 Share of volunteers with better interpersonal and social competences (to a greater extent)

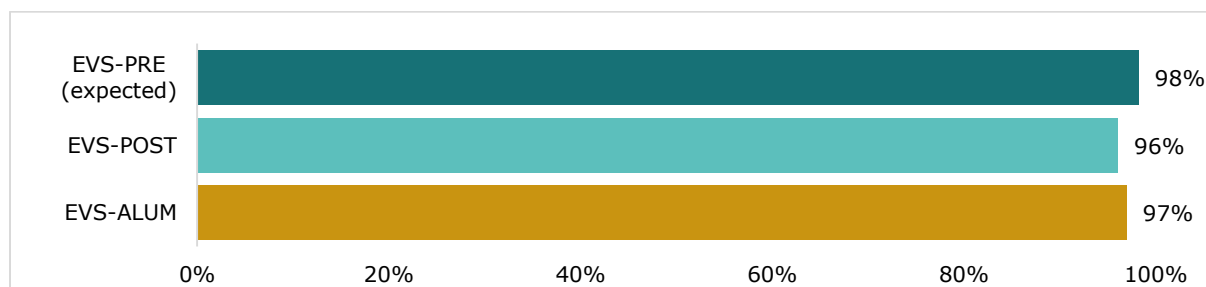


Q: "After taking part in EVS, ..." Item: "I have better interpersonal and social competences" answer "to a greater extent"
n = 4279

"Before EVS, I was not self-confident about my English, but now I am. This changed my life because when I returned from EVS, I found a job at (a company) where English was a requirement. Without having gone on EVS, I am sure that I would not have been able to do an interview in English and do daily work in English."
EVS volunteer in DE, 2013-

Practically all EVS volunteers expect to improve their language skills before going abroad, and 96% of the volunteers and 97% of the alumni indeed state that they improved their language skills, both in the local language and in English during EVS, the latter often used to communicate with staff from host organisations and with other volunteers. While most start learning the local language from zero, they usually become fluent by the end of their EVS. Equally strong is the impact on improving English.

Figure 4-62 Acquisition or improvement of foreign language skills



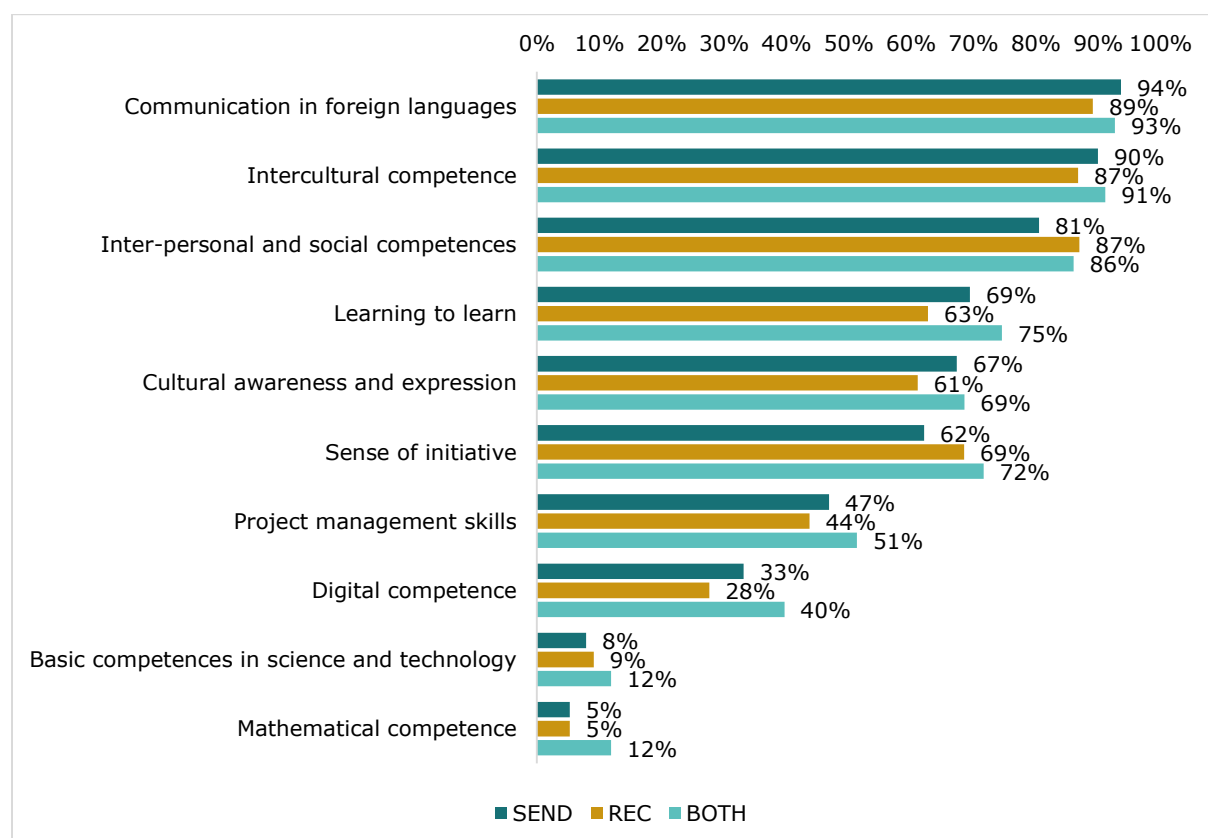
Q: "What kind of advantages have you gained from your stay abroad?" (EVS-POST, EVS-ALUM)

Q: "What kind of advantages do you expect you gain from your stay abroad?" (EVS-RE) Item "Acquisition or improvement of foreign language skills"
Sum of answers "Agree" + "Somewhat agree"
n = 6232

The improvement in the language skills as a result of the EVS experience was found to be useful in finding employment, and there are concrete examples where volunteers obtained a job after EVS precisely due to their language skills. This was the case for an ex-EVS volunteer from Latvia, who did her EVS in Finland. She expressed how EVS helped her with her career in terms of available job opportunities. This is because she learned to speak English fluently and has also learned other languages (mainly Spanish) as a result of the periods she did abroad after her EVS. The language skills, together with her relevant study background in culture management, helped her to secure a good job at a Museum of Foreign Art in Latvia.

Asked about their expectations and concrete experiences, **not all learning and competence related aspects were considered to be equally developed through EVS**. But it is highly remarkable that the ranking order stays the same for all aspects - starting from the expectations of EVS volunteers before they began their EVS stay abroad through to the perception of those who just finished their stay, to the alumni several years after the experience. **The highest gains were found, both in the online survey and the interviews, in relation to the social and human skills (interpersonal communication, understanding of other cultures, adapting to new environments) and linguistic skills, but to a lesser extent technical skills.**

Figure 4-63 Most developed skills and competences of EVS participants according to EVS organisations

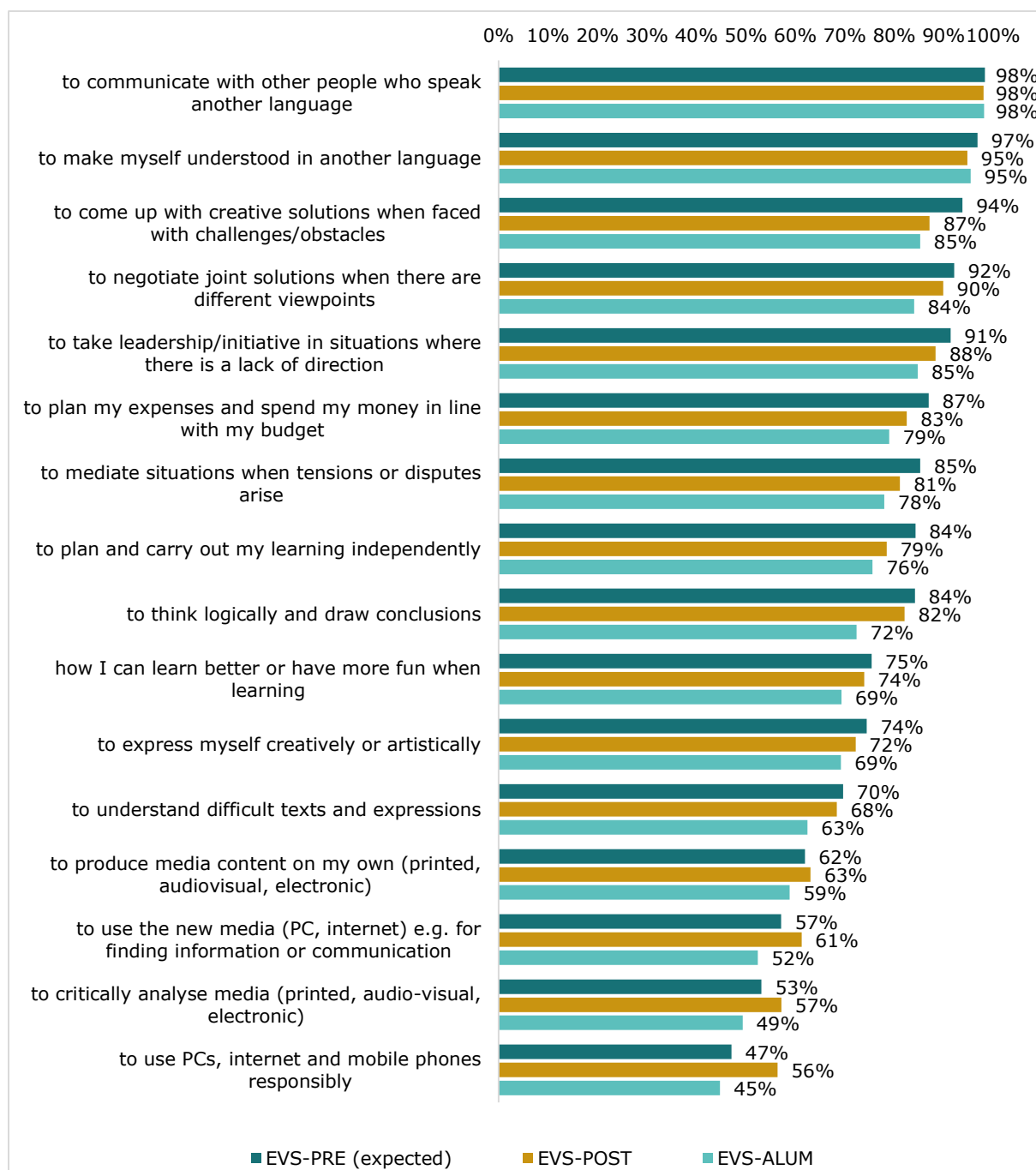


Q: "Which of the participants' skills and competences will most likely be developed through their participation in the project?"
n = 1389

According to the online survey, communication in another language and making yourself understood are the top two skills which nearly all EVS volunteers expect to improve and which also nearly all former participants confirm to have improved. These skills are

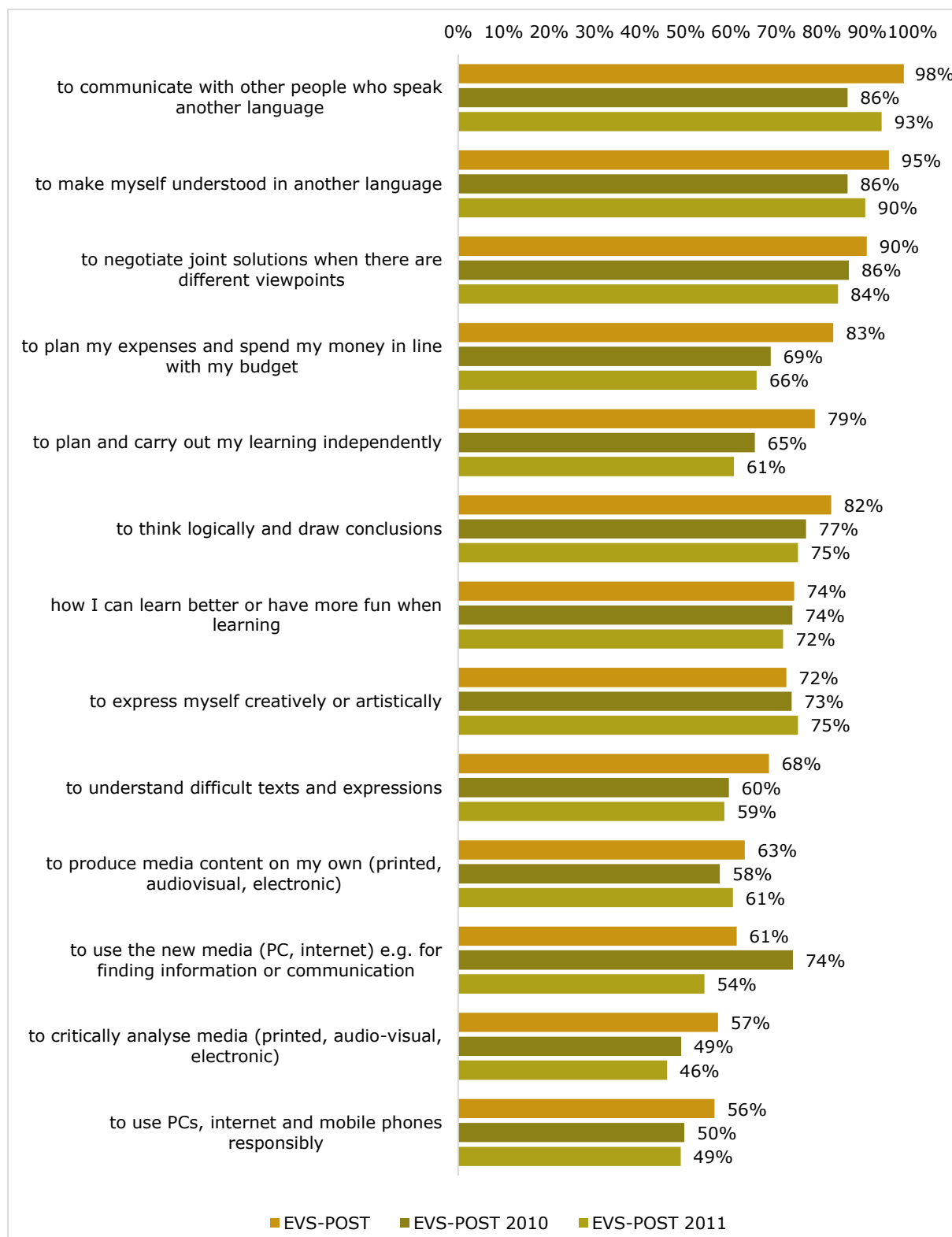
closely followed by finding creative solutions and negotiating solutions as well as taking leadership. The top two skills were also the most expected aspects in the evaluation from 2010 and 2011, however the differences between expectations and the perceived improvement are larger. Another interesting aspect is that the largest gains, from expected to actually experienced improvements, can be observed for the least expected skills (PC/Internet +9% and critical media analysis +4%).

Figure 4-64 Skills expected or experienced to be improved during EVS



Q: "Through my participation in EVS, I expect to learn better:" (EVS-PRE)
 Q: "Through my participation in EVS, I learned better:" (EVS-POST, EVS-ALUM)
 Sum of answer "Definitely" + "To some extent"
 n = 5985

Figure 4-65 Skills experienced to be improved during EVS – comparison to 2010 and 2011

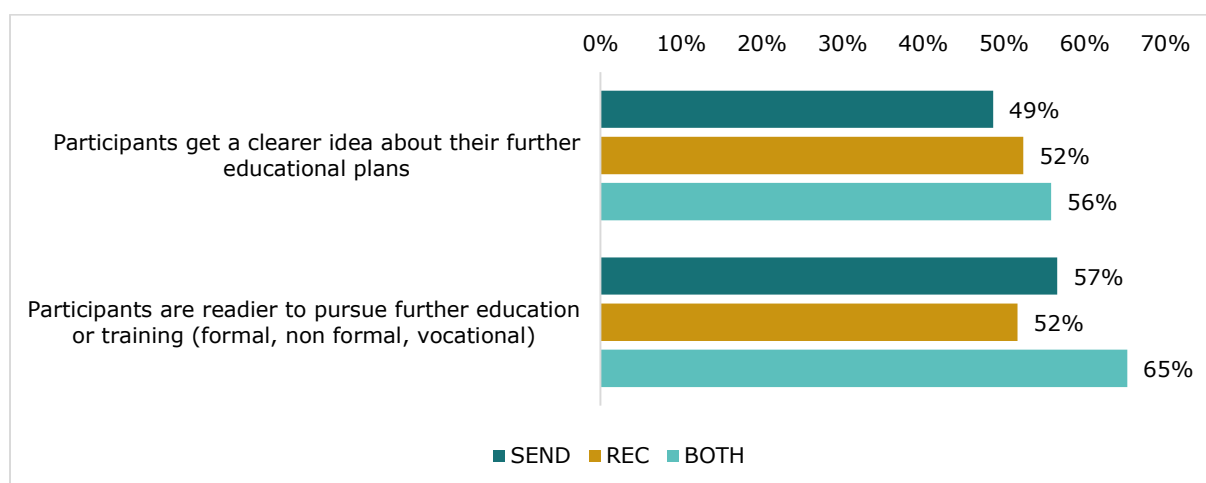


Q: "Through my participation in EVS, I learnt better:"
Sum of answer "Definitely" + "To some extent"
n (EVS-POST) = 2301

Approximately 50% of the EVS organisations also state that they think EVS volunteers get a clearer idea about their future. Most optimistic are organisations that send and receive volunteers; least optimistic (but still nearly 50%) are the organisations that only send volunteers.

Furthermore, 65% of the EVS organisations that send and receive volunteers confirm that the volunteers are readier to pursue further education or training, while purely sending (57%) and purely receiving organisations (52%) were slightly less optimistic.

Figure 4-66 Impact on participants' educational plans and readiness for further training, perspective of EVS organisations



Q: "Which of the following effects of participation in the project would you expect to notice during and after the project?"
n = 1389

The experience of EVS contributes to overcoming shyness and improving communication and inter-personal skills.

Many volunteers claimed in the interviews that before EVS they were very shy and found it difficult to speak in public, but that this changed during EVS when they learned to be at ease with different and large audiences. In particular, volunteers and alumni reported that through EVS they increased their openness to meeting new people, their self-confidence when giving public presentations, and improved their listening skills and understanding of different viewpoints. This was reported by a volunteer who is currently doing her EVS in Hungary. She stated that during her first five months of EVS, she has mainly been helping at a local school teaching English and German. Although she does not plan to become a teacher once returning to Germany, her teaching experience has helped her to further improve her English and, even more notably, to gain greater self-confidence. She reported that before going on EVS, her low self-esteem would have prevented her from standing in front of a group of young people and teaching them English. Likewise, a volunteer who is currently on mobility in Romania expressed how before EVS, she was not comfortable with speaking in front of an audience, as she was afraid of being asked questions to which she may not have had an answer. Now, after the first three months of her EVS experience, she feels much more comfortable with speaking in front of a class.

"Before EVS, at pre-departure training, they [volunteers] are shy to speak in public, for instance to present in front of others their expectations from EVS, but upon their return, they are at ease and enjoy giving public presentations like those at evaluation meetings."
EVS project leader (ADICE), FR, 2016

Although technical aspects such as the use of IT and technology, critical media analysis, new media, or the production of media content only improved for 45-61% of the

respondents in the online survey, still many volunteers also reported in the interviews that they learned about new topics and developed new technical skills during EVS. The technical skills acquired varied according to the field of work of each EVS association. The skills most frequently mentioned in interviews are:

- Event management, e.g. how to organise meetings and conferences, prepare promotional materials and use social media to promote events and reach out to potential participants;
- Digital competences, e.g. use of social media; database management; use of specific software.
- Presentation skills and delivery of training;
- New teaching methods;
- Communication skills, e.g. how to communicate with people with disabilities using non-verbal communication;
- Photography and video-editing skills; and
- Project management skills, e.g. how to write project proposals for youth projects and coordinate with partners.

Even volunteers with rich prior experience in the given field of work of the host organisation benefitted from EVS by learning new methods or approaches in the area, which were different from the practices in their home country. For example, in Italy, some volunteers learned new methods to work with persons with disabilities, while others learned how to approach the target groups *'as equals rather than as ill people in need of assistance'*.

The perspectives of EVS volunteers and alumni are largely supported by the views of the EVS organisations. In addition to the aspects already mentioned above, EVS improves the general willingness to learn (75%), sense of initiative (72%) and project management skills (51%). EVS organisations also confirmed that volunteers get a clearer idea about their further educational plans (56%) and the readiness to pursue further education or training (65%).

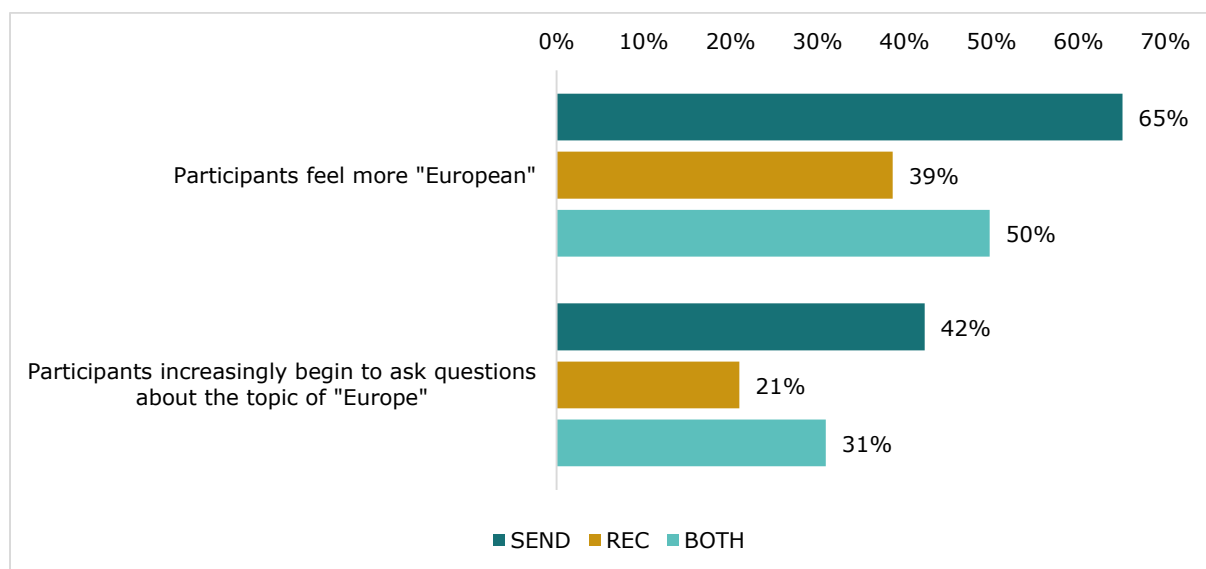
Stronger sense of belonging to the EU

Another dimension is the impact on the relationship towards Europe and the EU. We analysed whether EVS volunteers become more aware of common European values, have a higher interest in European topics, improve their image of the EU, and in general feel more European than before the EVS experience.

The online survey, literature and interviews jointly confirm that while there is some evidence of an improved sense of belonging to the EU. However, the increase is not necessarily high because most of the volunteers already have a good knowledge about the EU and embrace the European identity before EVS. According to the survey, the 50% of the sending and receiving EVS organisations (65% of the purely sending and only 39% of the purely receiving organisations) expect the volunteers to feel more European and 31% (42% and 21% respectively) expect and observe them to increasingly ask questions about the topic of "Europe". However, the expectations, especially of the sending organisations, are rather unfulfilled as the share of the receiving organisations confirming such development is considerably lower. These findings are mirrored by the perspective of **the EVS volunteers who already have a strong relationship to Europe and this remains stable over time.** A comparison with the EVS alumni reveals that the relation to Europe even slightly grows.

EVS volunteers do have a feeling of commitment to Europe. This is further confirmed by the results concerning voting behaviour. Two thirds of future EVS volunteers and non-EVS volunteers who were eligible to vote, participated in the 2014 European Parliament elections compared to 60% of the EVS alumni. Motivation to participate in EU elections is increased in the case of 25% of the EVS volunteers, which is quite remarkable considering the already substantial participation rate.

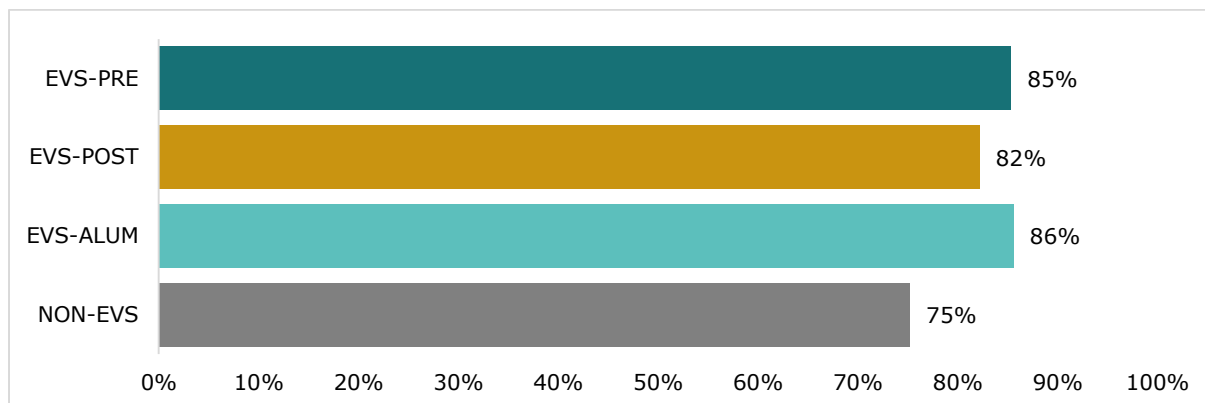
Figure 4-67 Expected and observed effects of EVS on participants regarding attitudes towards Europe according to EVS organisations



Q: "Which of the following effects of participation in the project would you expect to (ORG-SEND)

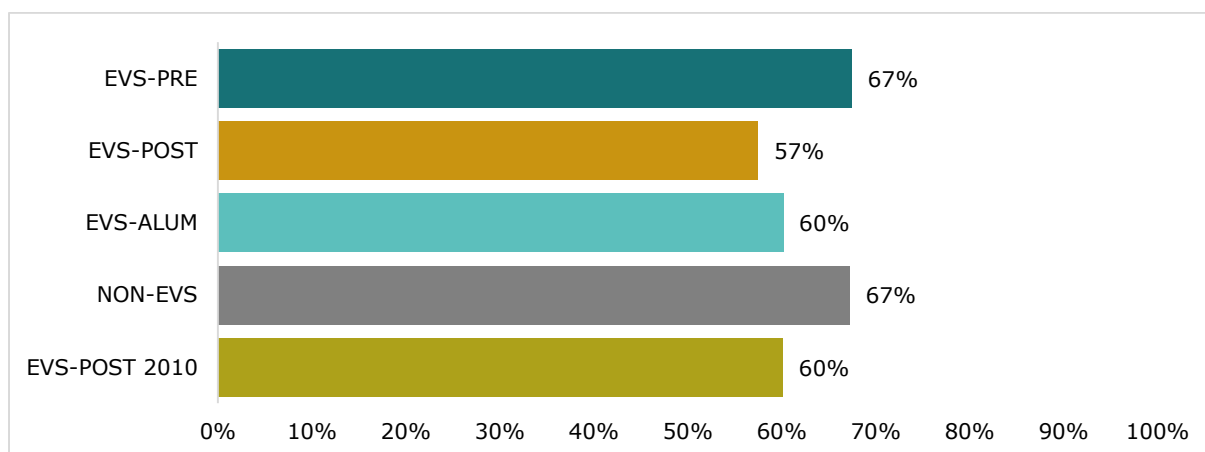
Q: "Which of the following effects of participation in the project did you notice during and after the project?" (ORG-SEND, REC, BOTH)
n = 1378

Figure 4-68 Relationship to Europe



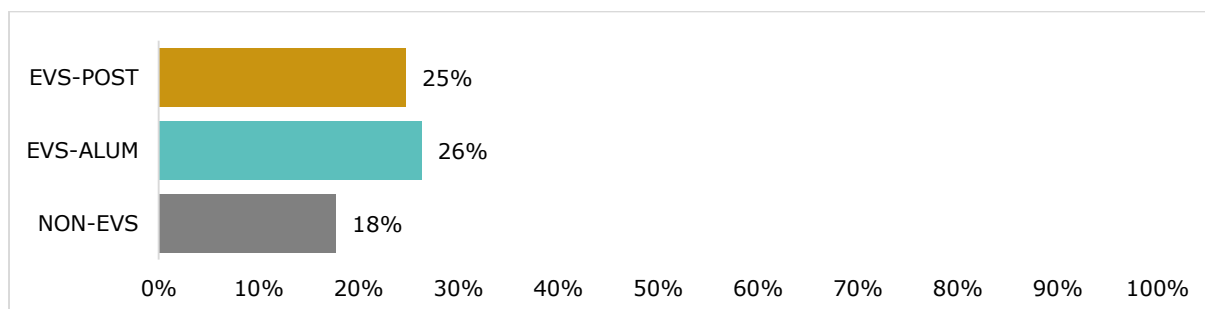
Q: "How strongly do you relate to..." Item "...Europe?"
Sum of answers "Strongly" + "Moderately"
n = 6257

Figure 4-69 Participation in the 2014 European Parliament elections



Q: "Did you vote in the 2014 European Parliament elections?"
Answer "Voted out of those eligible"
n = 6181

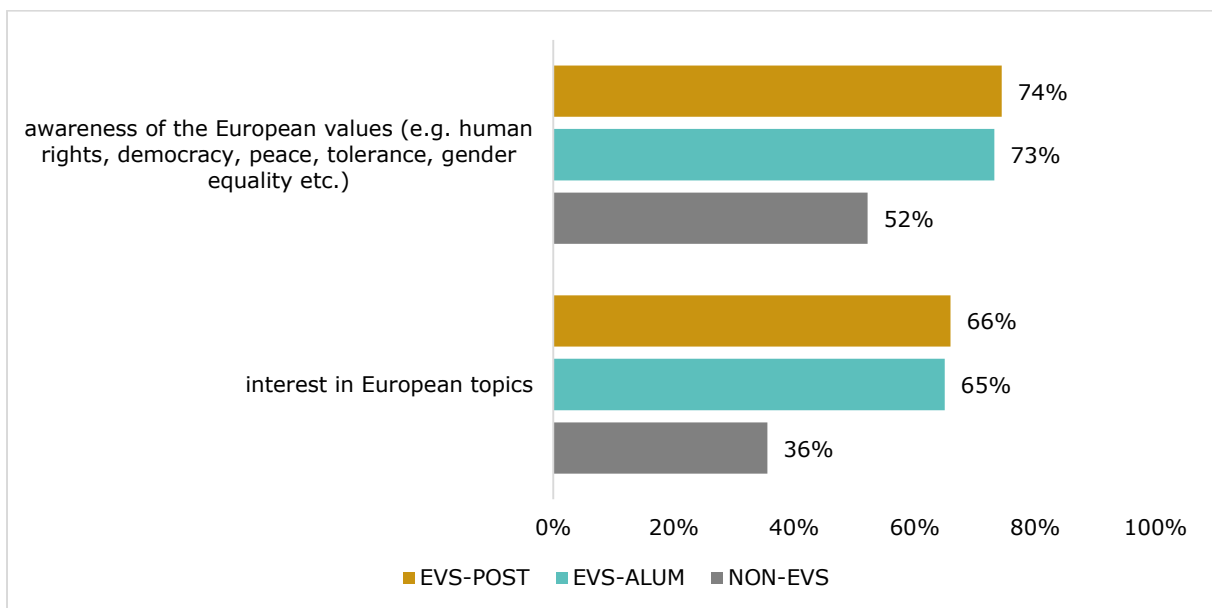
Figure 4-70 Increased motivation to participate in EU elections after volunteering experience



Q: "Did your EVS mobility increase your..." Item "motivation to vote in EU elections"
n = 4179

EVS has a positive influence on many volunteers regarding the interest in the European topics. **Two thirds of the EVS participants are more interested in the European topics after EVS.** Furthermore, EVS seems to have a **stronger impact on its participants regarding their increased awareness of the European values** (74%) than volunteering in a home country (52%). For 41% (44% of the alumni) their image of the EU improved, which is considerably less compared to the evaluation in 2010 and 2011 (approx. 60%). The share of those, on which EVS seems to have had a negative influence, is in all aspects between 7 and 8%. **In addition, 36% feel more European after their EVS experience and this feeling gets stronger in time (43% of the alumni).**

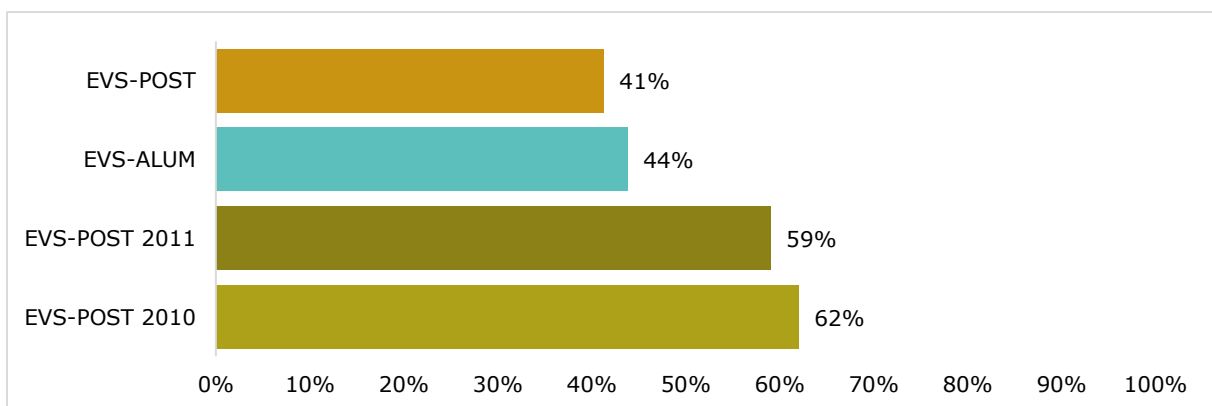
Figure 4-71 Attitudes towards Europe after EVS



Q: "Did your EVS mobility increase your...:" (EVS-POST, EVS-ALUM)

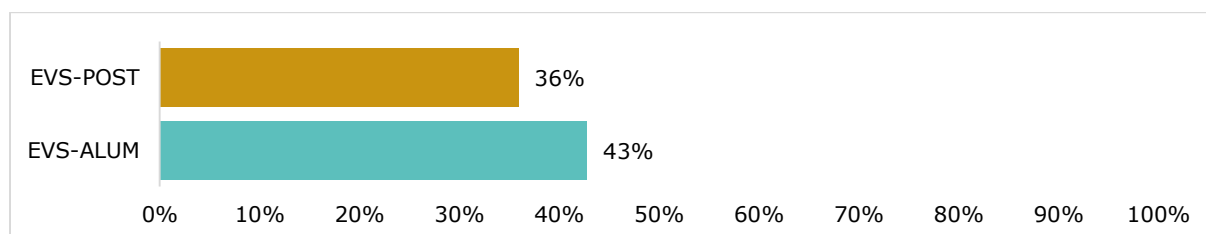
Q: "Did your volunteering experience increase your...:" (NON-EVS)
n = 4179

Figure 4-72 Improvement of image of the EU



Q: "After taking part in EVS, your image of the EU:"
 Answer "got better"
 n = 4415

Figure 4-73 Feeling as a European



Q: "I now feel as a European" Answer "to a greater extent"
 n = 4257

"We were with French, Spanish, Italian, and Latvian people – people from all over the continent, people from different religions, different ages. We were all together, doing the same thing for the same purpose. This shows that we can be united. It was amazing for me. I realised that if you have an important purpose, people can be united regardless of their background – a kind of unity in purpose." **Ex-EVS volunteer who did EVS in RO, 2016**

These changes are related to experiences during EVS that were revealed in the case study interviews. Volunteers from different countries live together and share accommodation. While initially volunteers may find it difficult to adapt to sharing their private and work space with other volunteers from different cultures, it emerges from the interviews that over time the differences give way to a discovery of common values and

similar interests. Overcoming and welcoming cultural differences contributes to the development of their European awareness, as confirmed in the interviews with project leaders. By taking part in EVS, young people improve their sense of belonging to the EU. Findings from previous studies on EVS (ECORYS, 2011; RAY, 2012; RAY, 2014) have consistently shown that the majority of EVS volunteers feel more aware of common European values and are interested in European topics to a greater extent than before their EVS.

An ex-EVS volunteer from Turkey expressed how the biggest change he experienced during EVS in Romania was the strengthening of his European, or even global citizenship, through becoming aware that volunteering can unite people of different backgrounds under one common purpose. As a result of learning about the Romanian people and culture during his EVS, he broke all his stereotypes about Romania. Likewise, volunteers from Latvia and France who are on EVS in Hungary, reported that due to the nature of their tasks, they are in daily contact with members of the local community, which further fostered the impact of the EVS experience on them. This made it possible for both the volunteers and members of the local community to understand each other better, to learn about their cultural differences, and to experience how such barriers can be overcome. This experience also allowed both groups to feel more connected to Europe and the EU.

Through the international environment of their EVS, volunteers gain new perspectives on their hosting country and on the home countries of their fellow EVS volunteers. Moreover, volunteers reap the benefits from being part of a large group of international volunteers and realising that it is thanks to an EU programme that they could come together. Project managers reported that volunteers typically develop a

"They [the EVS volunteers] develop a sense of belonging to an EVS community, a feeling of a shared identity as part of a big EVS family". **EVS organisation, PL, 2016**

strong sense of belonging to the 'EVS family', which is a reflection of their belonging to a bigger European community. This also **contributes to the European integration** and does so in a sustainable way as many volunteers continue to keep in contact with the friends they had made during their EVS, from both locals as well as other EVS volunteers from different countries.

"In EVS I knew that I was sent there by Europe to do something with and for other people from Europe. I felt more responsible than in Erasmus, like I had a debt towards Europe to represent the EU in Bosnia". EVS volunteer

The **EVS experience also enables participants to reflect on the meaning of Europe and of European citizenship**. For example, one volunteer from France who did his EVS in Bosnia and Herzegovina reported that the EVS experience developed his awareness of European values as well as a deep sense of responsibility towards fellow Europeans. Moreover, he felt compelled to fulfil his responsibility as an EU citizen by performing a good voluntary service in a non-EU country. What helped him develop his awareness about and interest in Europe

were the SALTO training seminars where he met peer volunteers from many different countries in the region of South-East Europe and he could debate about the present and future of Europe.

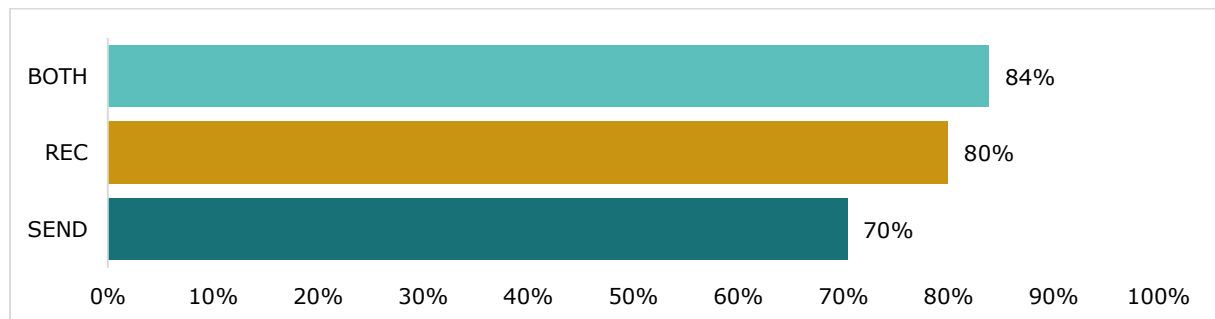
In the case studies, the biggest change in European identity was found to be in volunteers coming from non-EU countries. For example, one volunteer from Ukraine who did her EVS in Italy reported that after her experience of mobility abroad she felt '*more European*' than before. Furthermore, she reported that her EVS taught her a lot about Europe in practical terms, through her direct experience such as free movement in the Schengen area, which improved her image of the EU. She felt more European-minded thanks to understanding a different '*lifestyle*' and approach to life and work, and she believed that this is something that other people from her home town could also benefit from, possibly more than those from European countries or from bigger urban cities. Similarly, the Vice-President of Team for Youth, a sending/receiving/coordinating organisation in Romania, reported that volunteers from outside of the EU gain more from EVS than volunteers from EU countries. The impact of EVS is greater on them as they learn to a greater extent to be more open to integration and to absorb the values of the EU. A concrete example was an EVS volunteer from Ukraine who developed her English language skills during her EVS in Romania, which helped her find a job as a flight attendant for Qatar Airways.

Further mobility

A further dimension is the impact EVS might have on other forms of future mobility, in other words in how far EVS improves the readiness of volunteers to work, study or live abroad or their plans to do so, and whether we see a higher confidence to travel in other countries after EVS.

Overall, EVS experience has an impact on the participants' willingness to work, study or live abroad in the future. In the online survey, 71% of the EVS organisations state that they expect volunteers to be better prepared to study, work, or live in another country after an EVS experience, and 83% even experienced it, with differences between purely sending (70%), purely receiving (80%) and equally sending and receiving organisations (84%). The results match those of volunteers and alumni.

Figure 4-74 Preparedness of participants to study, work, or live in another country



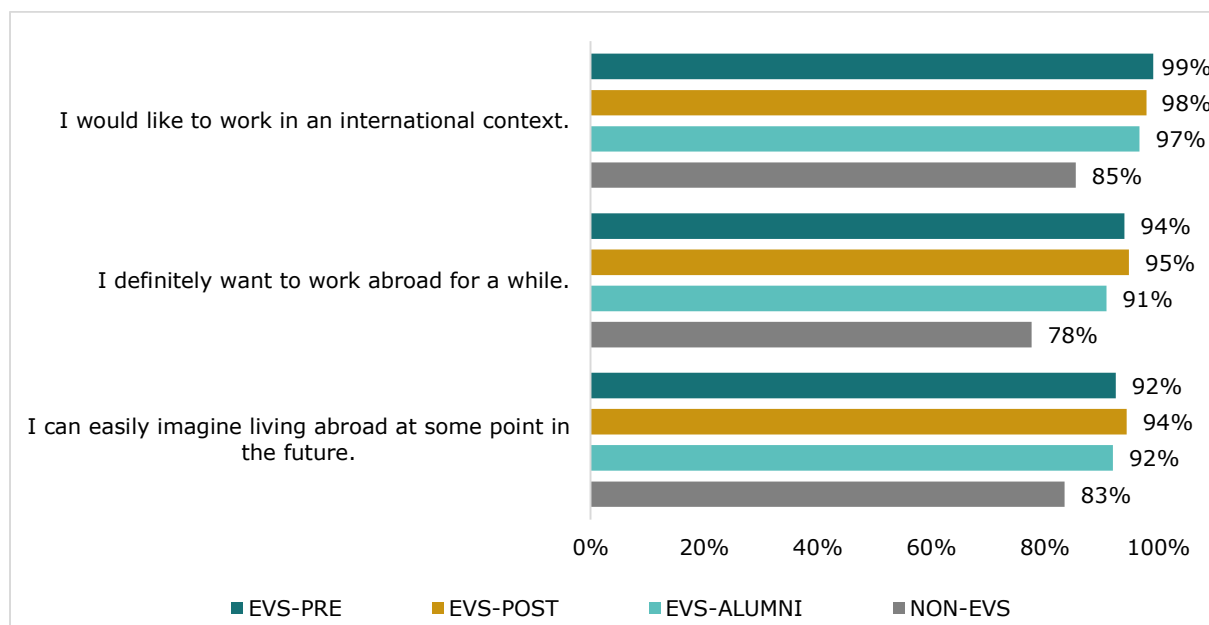
Q: "Which of the following effects of participation in the project would you expect to notice during and after the project?" (ORG-SEND)

Q: "Which of the following effects of participation in the project did you notice during and after the project?" (ORG-REC, ORG-BOTH) Item "Participants are better prepared to study, work, or live in another country"

n = 1114

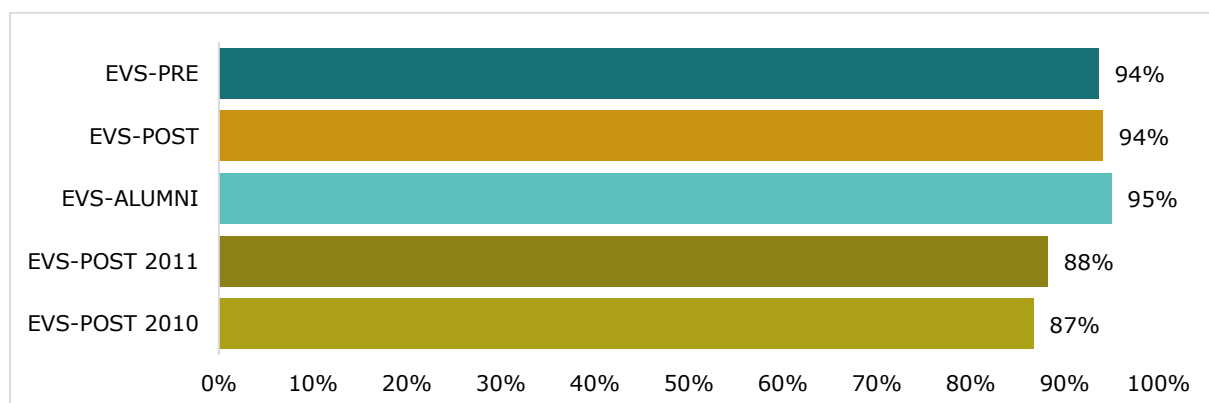
Practically every EVS volunteer can easily imagine living or working abroad (95%) and nearly all want to work in an international context (98%). They also feel more confident to move to other countries (94%) than the volunteers evaluated in 2010 and 2011 (87-88%).

Figure 4-75 Future plans of EVS volunteers



Q: "How do you see your future?"
Sum of answers "Agree" + "Somewhat agree"
n = 6335

Figure 4-76 Learning confidence to move around on my own in other countries



Q: "Through my participation in EVS, I expect to learn:" (EVS-PRE)
Q: "Through my participation in EVS, I learnt better:" (EVS-POST, EVS-ALUMNI, EVS-POST 2010, EVS-POST 2011) Item "to feel more confident to move around on my own in other countries (e.g. travel, study, work placements/ internship, job, etc.)"
Sum of answers "Definitely" + "To some extent"
n = 5487

This view was shared among many volunteers and alumni as well as among youth workers and project leaders. By introducing volunteers to new cultures and to living in an international environment, **EVS stimulates the volunteers' interest in traveling and discovering new places and cultures.** Discovering an interest in traveling to other

"Thanks to EVS I have decided that I would like to pursue my career outside of Ukraine because I feel happier living according to European standards. EVS has helped me understand who I am and what I would like from life. Thanks to EVS, I also experienced the beauty of travelling without excessive restrictions, such as border controls". **EVS volunteer in IT, 2016-2017**

countries is much related to an increase in European awareness. After taking part in EVS, young people are more ready to work, study or live abroad (RAY, 2012; RAY, 2014; RAY, 2015a). According to the results of a survey among participants in Youth in Action projects (European Commission, 2011b), 63% of EVS participants reported intending to go abroad to study, work, do an internship or live in another EU country. 76% also reported feeling more confident to travel on their own in other countries.

One volunteer in Italy described how EVS introduced her to what she calls '*European standards of living*' and how this helped her discover that she feels happier living abroad than in her home country. This led to her deciding to plan for her future abroad regardless of whether she would be working or studying. Likewise, an ex-EVS volunteer from Turkey, who did his EVS in Romania, reported that a big change he experienced as a result of EVS is the desire to travel more in order to discover more countries and cultures. He felt that EVS broadened his horizons and motivated him to travel to Greece and to Israel to learn more about these countries with which Turkey has had a long-standing conflict. An interviewed representative from a receiving/sending organisation in Finland also reported that by living in an intercultural environment, many volunteers are '*bitten by the travelling bug*', meaning that they become more confident and determined to travel in Europe, including non-mainstream destinations which they may not have considered before EVS and including study and work periods. Before EVS, it did not even cross many volunteers' mind to go and live abroad, feeling like such opportunities are only for '*more successful young people*', explained one EVS volunteer coordinator.

Volunteering abroad for a long period increases the volunteers' readiness to move to a new country to work, study or live in the future. It starts with increasing their confidence to travel to other countries on their own and, in doing so, it gives them the courage to take initiative and to take the risk of moving abroad. One volunteer who did her EVS in Germany mentioned how living abroad had introduced her to living abroad in general, which provided her with the tools for independent living and helped her understand how people live in other countries. Similarly, for one ex-EVS from Latvia, a significant impact of EVS has been the impact on the sense of belonging to the EU and interest and confidence to move to study, work and live in other countries. She recognises that moving to live in another country is challenging and a huge learning experience, but she embraced it and consequently has lived abroad on two different occasions since the EVS: once as an au pair in Spain and once as an Erasmus exchange student in Spain. It was the EVS mobility that made her realise that she is able to '*cope*' in another country, and to learn new and different local cultures, traditions and practicalities.

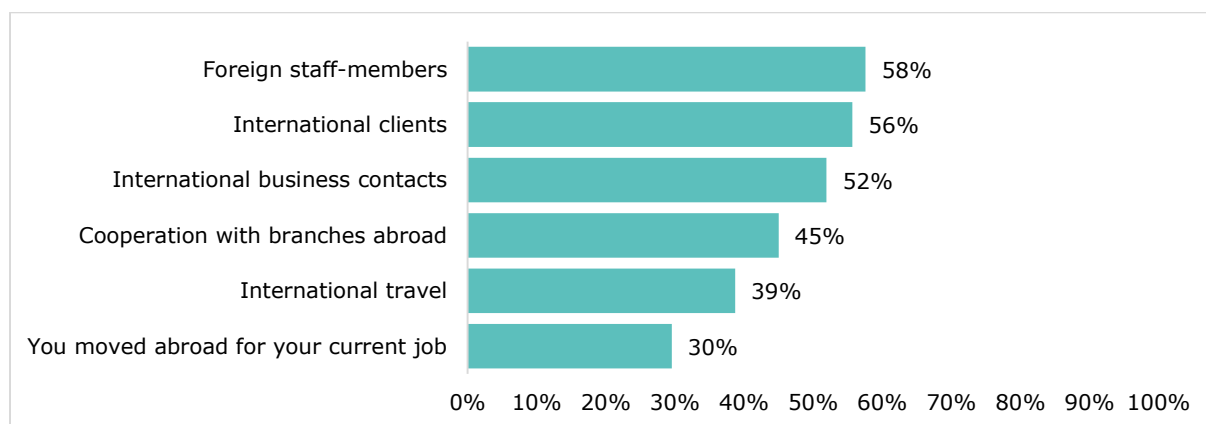
According to the case studies, volunteers coming from rural areas as well as those from non-EU countries benefit the most from the cross-border element of EVS. For those coming from metropolitan areas and from within the EU, EVS helped them to understand that they are ready to work abroad. For the volunteers coming from rural areas and especially for those from non-EU countries, the impact was wider, helping them understand and appreciate the free movement without border controls and, as a result, increase their image and value of the EU.

Overall, the experience of volunteering abroad through EVS helps participants to better understand what the next steps they want to take are, as a result of which some do decide to move abroad to further their professional career or to continue their studies. Interviews with project leaders revealed that some volunteers have chosen to remain abroad in the host country or to move to another country after completing their EVS. They explained that during EVS volunteers learn more about the opportunities available in terms of scholarships and other bursaries, as well as about the possibilities offered in different countries for work or study.

Such findings from the case studies also help to explain why we see **substantial impact regarding concrete international aspects of the current work life of EVS alumni**.

More than half of the EVS alumni confirmed that in their jobs they deal with foreign staff members, international clients and business contacts and thus work in a very international environment. Among the alumni, 45% cooperate with branches abroad, 39% travel internationally for business and 30% even moved abroad for their job.

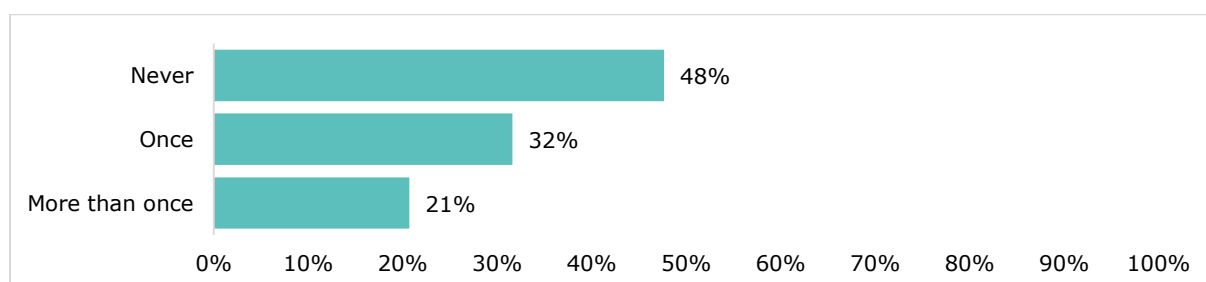
Figure 4-77 Share of alumni who confirm that their job has the following international characteristics, alumni



Q: "Does your job have one or more of the following international characteristics?" (multiple response)
n = 2611

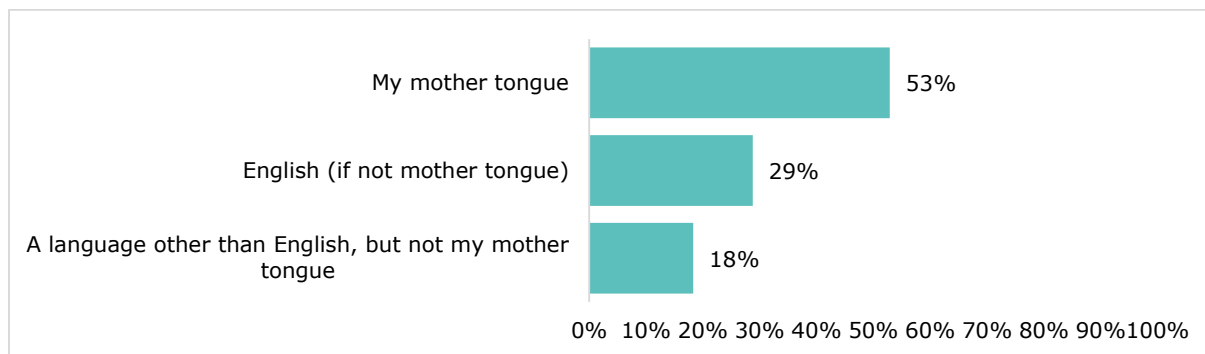
The online survey also confirms the results from interviews in that **EVS makes people more mobile**. Half of the EVS alumni have already changed their living / working country at least once, or even more than once in the case of 20% of alumni. Slightly more than half still work in their mother tongue, although 47% work in a different language, predominantly English. At the time of the survey, one third live in a different country than their country of origin, half of those in the country where they had volunteered under EVS.

Figure 4-78 Frequency of changing living / working country after EVS



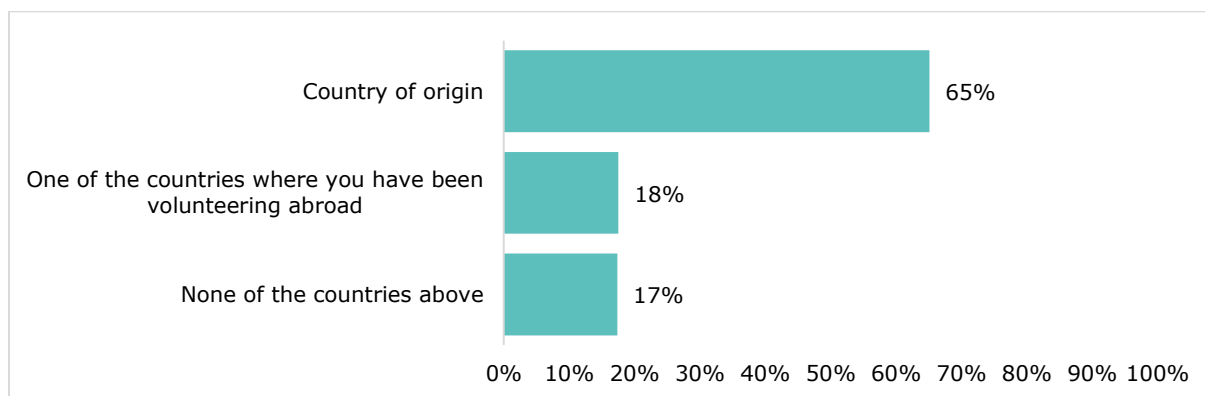
Q: "How many times have you changed your living/working country since your EVS experience?"
n = 2018

Figure 4-79 Current language of work, alumni



Q: "What is your current language(s) of work?"
n = 1136

Figure 4-80 Current work location, alumni



Q: "Where is your company/organisation located? In which country do you work/live?"
n = 1135

Increased intercultural learning and dialogue

An important component of EVS is the aim to make volunteers more inter-culturally apt. This refers to aspects such as an increase in intercultural skills (communicating with people from different countries and cultures), a better understanding of other cultures, more receptivity towards multiculturalism, more tolerance and respect for other cultures, and an improved intercultural dialogue.

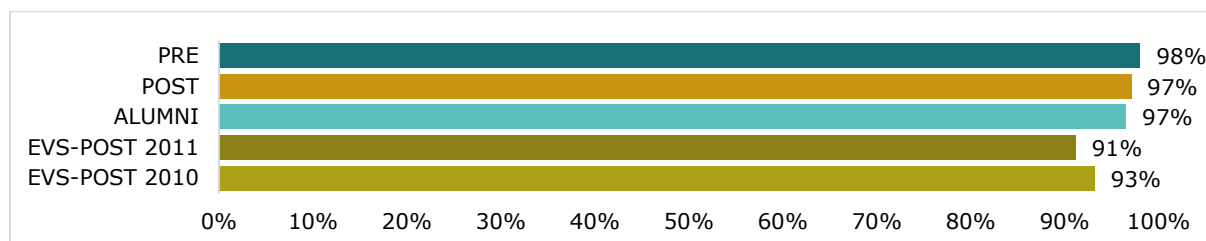
Online survey, literature and interviews jointly confirm that participation in the EVS leads to an increased knowledge about and interest in other countries and cultures as well as in the different perspectives and ways of thinking.

During EVS, volunteers learn about the host country from the staff and volunteers they work with in the receiving organisations and from interactions with locals, as well as through travelling within the country and from media. Moreover, volunteers also learn about other countries from interactions with their peer EVS volunteers and in particular by sharing an apartment with them. Previous research has found that transnational volunteering experiences can impact on volunteers' understanding and awareness about other countries, communities and people. For example, 95% of volunteers who participated in EVS in 2000-2006 reported that they increased their knowledge about people from other cultural backgrounds and their values. In consequence, 80% of ex-EVS volunteers said that, after their EVS, they became more tolerant towards people from other countries and 88% were more positive about other ethnic and religious groups (ECORYS, 2007).

"Sharing a flat with people from different countries was an opportunity for reflecting on how we are influenced by our nationality. It was interesting to see Greek and Turkish girls talking about their country's history, i.e. clashes and wars, and how they have been taught this history in their schools." EVS volunteer in PL, 2015-2016

For one EVS volunteer in Spain, co-habiting with his flatmates is proving both challenging and rewarding. He is learning how to interact with people from different backgrounds and how to accept them without judging. Likewise, a German volunteer who is currently on EVS in Hungary reported that by working at the local schools, she is in regular contact not only with her receiving organisation but also with members of the local community. This has helped her tremendously in terms of gaining a better understanding of different cultures, to be more open, to challenge and overcome the stereotypes she had about Hungary and even more so about Hungarian people. She mentioned how this experience has helped her realise that all of the barriers and cultural differences which she was previously apprehensive of can be overcome.

Figure 4-81 Learning to get along with people with a different cultural background



Q: "Through my participation in EVS, I expect to learn better:" (EVS-PRE)

Q: "Through my participation in EVS, I learnt better:" (EVS-POST, EVS-ALUM, EVS-POST 2010, EVS-POST 2011)

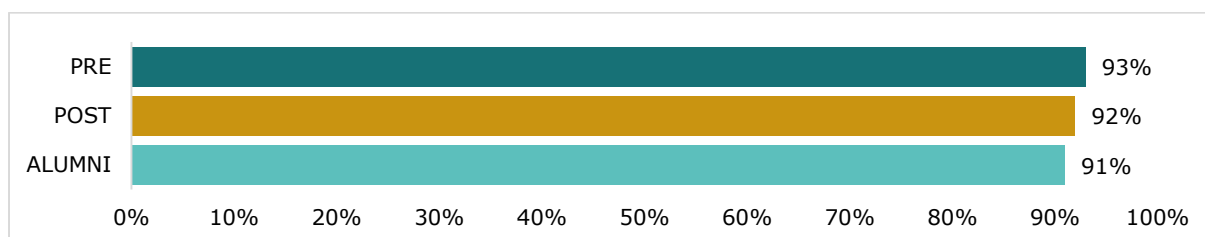
Item "to get along with people who have a different cultural background"

Sum of answers "Definitely" + "To some extent"

n = 5907

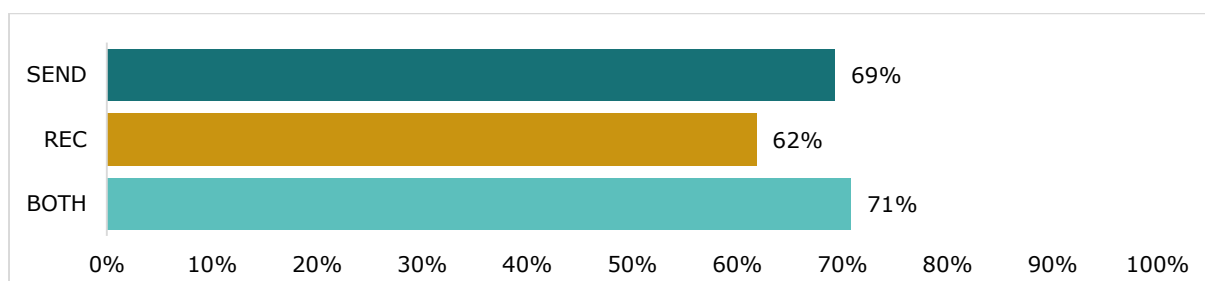
In the online survey, 98% of the EVS volunteers expected – before going abroad - to learn to better cope with people from different cultural backgrounds, and 97% of those who came back had this experience indeed. Additionally, 93% expected to be more tolerant towards other people's values after their EVS experience and 92% confirmed that this is the case. The EVS alumni show the same results as the current EVS volunteers. In addition, 71% of the EVS organisations see that the volunteers become more receptive towards multiculturalism, although the expectations are slightly higher in this regard.

Figure 4-82 Learning to be more tolerant towards other person's values and behaviour.



Q: "How did the EVS stay abroad change your personality" (EVS-POST, EVS-ALUM)
 Q: "What changes in your personality do you expect from your EVS stay abroad?" (EVS-PRE)
 Item "to get along with people who have a different cultural background"
 Sum of answers "Highly expected" + "Expected" (EVS-PRE) "Highly improved" +
 "Improved" (EVS-POST, EVS-ALUM)
 n = 6046

Figure 4-83 Increased reception of Europe's multiculturalism



Q: "Which of the following effects of participation in the project would you expect during and after the project?" (ORG-SEND)
 Q: "Which of the following effects of participation in the project did you notice during and after the project?" (ORG-REC, ORG-BOTH)
 Item "Participants become more receptive for Europe's multiculturalism"
 n = 936

The interviews revealed how **the experience abroad also motivates young people to reflect on their own culture** from a different perspective. For example, an Italian volunteer who did her EVS in Turkey reported that she became more interested in the news about Italy by listening to the perception of Turkish people about her country and the Turkish media coverage about it, which led to strengthening her Italian identity. Similarly, a Polish volunteer who is doing EVS in Ukraine reported that EVS has changed her perspective of how she sees her own country and broadened her horizons.

"After just two months of EVS, I already see some concrete changes in my personality and I am questioning my own cultural traits and habits." **EVS volunteer in IT, 2016-2017**

"Whereas Erasmus students are usually in their "Erasmus bubble", having little to no interaction with the local communities, the EVS volunteers are embedded in the local community in Berlin and at their workplace. Volunteers experience all the German festivities and customs during their work with the school children and are given the opportunity to present their own culture [to the pupils]. **EVS organisation (IJGD), DE, 2016**

Several of the volunteers and organisations consulted for the case studies considered that the gains in intercultural awareness are greater in the case of EVS than compared to Erasmus, because the volunteers are immersed more in the local community and culture than the Erasmus students. The projects in schools are especially culturally immersive for EVS volunteers and pupils alike, as reported by the youth workers working on EVS at an organisation in Germany.

"I believe that the EVS features a stronger intercultural learning than the Erasmus programme." **EVS volunteer in DE, 2014-2015**

4.2 Organisational impact of EVS

This section analyses firstly the two main types of organisational impacts identified (the organisational development and the internationalisation of the participating organisations), and then the factors that have a direct influence on the scale and scope of the organisational EVS impacts.

This section is based primarily on interviews undertaken in the case studies, findings from the survey with hosting, sending and coordinating EVS organisations, the literature review and the discussions in the stakeholder seminar.

Key findings

1. EVS brings clear benefits for participating organisations: **97% of surveyed organisations consider their participation 'successful'**.
2. Organisations particularly value the positive EVS organisational impact on **'openness to cultural diversity'** among staff (72%) and **'improved project management competence'** (62%).
3. EVS organisations also value the impact of EVS on the international character of their organisation, with **nearly all (96%) being of the opinion that the EVS programme has strengthened their international profile**. Three out of four organisations (74%) plan to stay involved in EVS.
4. The benefits that EVS brings to the participating organisations are **wide-ranging, although they tend to be less visible and less tangible than the EVS impact on individual volunteers**. However, the **impact of EVS on the participating organisations could be further improved**. The main issue appears to be the sub-optimal quality of some EVS projects, explained by three factors. Firstly, the quality of EVS projects is not monitored in a systematic manner. Secondly, EVS host organisations tend to lack capacity to ensure consistently high-quality EVS activities. Finally, the EVS sending organisations lack resources to provide high-quality pre-departure preparation and follow-up upon return of EVS volunteers. Coordinating organisations and National Agencies are already playing a role in addressing these weaknesses but their role could be further strengthened and better resourced.
5. EVS volunteers and project leaders have **different but complementing views about the organisational level impact**. Current and former volunteers feel that EVS participation has a direct, positive impact on youth workers and other project leaders involved in the EVS projects, usually in terms of skills development and intercultural learning. While these impacts are also mentioned by the representatives of EVS organisations, the latter focus mostly on organisational gains including the capacity-building and internationalisation, which again help the organisation to increase the offer and outreach of its activities and develop their quality.
6. **Volunteers are modest when assessing their impact on the host organisation** as they tend to find it difficult to define. Many think that they have not had a great deal of impact on the staff or the organisation. There are several reasons for such perceptions. Firstly, volunteers consider that their influence is not high because the organisation has already received many volunteers before them. Secondly, some EVS volunteers carry out their main tasks and activities outside the host organisation, meaning that their impact on the hosting organisation is not as high as on those groups or bodies (e.g. schools) with which they are frequently in contact.

4.2.1 The main types of organisational EVS impacts

The main organisational EVS impacts are, firstly, on the organisational development, especially in terms of positive changes in skills, aptitudes and attitudes of staff and, secondly, the international character of the organisation in relation to new partners and cultural awareness. These are summarised below and analysed in the following sections.

EVS impacts on the organisational development

- EVS increases **intercultural awareness** and openness towards cultural diversity in the organisations
- EVS contributes to **staff skills development** (project management, technical and language skills)
- EVS builds **the capacity of organisations** and, in this way, to facilitates their development through:
 - Increase in resources (mainly human and financial resources) that benefit small NGOs in particular
 - New ideas and perspectives brought in by EVS volunteers
 - Good practices and know-how learned from the EVS partner organisations
- EVS activities **strengthen the bond between the organisation and young people**

EVS impacts on the internationalisation of organisations

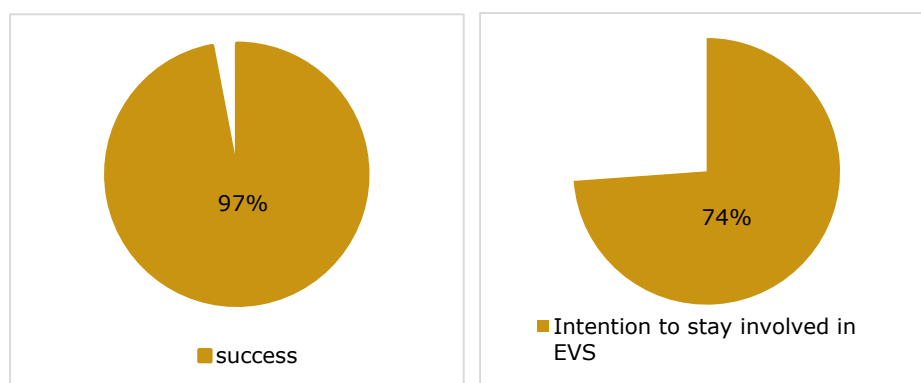
- EVS has strengthened the **international profile of organisations**
- Through EVS the organisations gained **international contacts and started new partnerships**
- Organisations participating in EVS learn how to **work with their partners**, who may have different approaches
- EVS enabled the realisation of **new transnational youth projects**
- The strong international profile that organisations gain through participation in EVS projects raises their **visibility and reputation in the community**

EVS impacts on organisational development

The impact of EVS on the organisational development of participating institutions was confirmed both by the EVS organisation survey as well as by the case study interviews. Overall, 97% of organisations consider their participation in EVS successful (see Figure 4-1). The result is almost the same for all types of organisations. However, substantially fewer organisations (74%) state that they intend to stay involved in EVS. This means that about a fifth of the organisations that consider the programme a success nevertheless do not intend to remain involved in it. The two main reasons given for this by the organisations are financial constraints and administrative barriers, as already described in Chapter 3. The sending organisations are particularly concerned about the availability of funding for them. The lump sum fee system is perceived as insufficient in terms of enabling sending organisations to cover the costs associated with preparing volunteers for their placement, and providing follow-up support for volunteers who are returning back home. The need to strengthen the support for sending organisations was identified as a priority issue.

The organisations also raised concerns about the availability of funding / support to host young people with fewer opportunities. Finally, small NGOs in particular express a concern over the administrative burden related to filling out applications and complying with reporting obligations, considering the project budgets and human resources available.

Figure 4-84 Share of organisations considering their EVS participation a success and intending to stay involved



Q: Do you consider your EVS participation a success?

n = 1 372

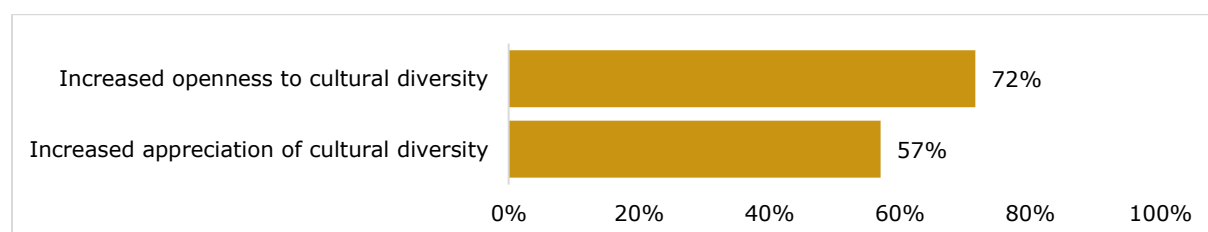
Q: Which effects did the project have on your organisation/group/body? (multiple response)

n = 1 377

The most frequently reported organisational impact of EVS participation is an **increase in intercultural awareness and openness towards cultural diversity** (see Figure 4-2). Seven out of 10 organisations (72%) report being more open to cultural diversity after their participation in EVS and 55% report that their appreciation of cultural diversity has increased. The perceived impact is somewhat lower for sending-only organisations, but, even so, 58% state that their openness to cultural diversity has increased.

Hosting volunteers from other countries enriches the knowledge of staff about other cultures, makes them more open to cultural differences and enhances the cultural diversity of the organisation. This is particularly notable in rural areas and in communities lacking sociocultural diversity, as highlighted by the case studies conducted in Hungary, France, Romania, and the UK. By observing EVS experiences, many youth workers and project leaders have also become motivated to do an EVS placement themselves.

Figure 4-85 Perceived impact of EVS on attitudes of organisations towards cultural diversity



Q: Which effects did the project have on your organisation/group/body? (multiple response)

n = 1 377

In addition, a strong increase in the intercultural awareness and appreciation of cultural diversity is by far the most cited change in the literature (ECORYS, 2007; European Commission 2001; RAY, 2012). For example, in 2011, 65% of the surveyed EVS youth workers reported an increased appreciation of cultural diversity as a result of their involvement in EVS projects (European Commission, 2011b). The study on EVS projects in schools in Estonia (Euroopa Nooerd, 2013) found a significant increase in tolerance towards people from other cultural backgrounds among the teachers who frequently interacted with EVS volunteers. The teachers also showed strong intentions to host other EVS volunteers in the future. In addition, some organisations have reported stronger participatory and inclusive youth work practices after the EVS project as well as an increased attention to including an international dimension in youth work (ECORYS, 2011).

Case studies identified a number of ways of how the presence of EVS volunteers makes it possible for staff and other volunteers in the host organisation to learn about different countries and cultures:

- An EVS volunteer – the first EVS volunteer that the organisation has hosted – discussed his home country (Poland) among the staff and among fellow EVS volunteers.
- In Italy, staff learned a lot about new languages and new cultures. One of the EVS volunteers performed typical French songs and played the guitar when he was living in France and thus shared his passion and knowledge on the topic with his colleagues.
- In Hungary, the organisation reported that their staff have become much more open-minded and richer in experiences through each volunteer they have received or sent.
- In Poland, the constant presence of two or three international volunteers in a team of the organisation was underlined as a factor that changes the work of the organisation. It makes the organisation more international, contributes to its cultural diversity and gives staff members an opportunity to hear various views and perspectives from outside Poland.
- In Romania, the EVS volunteer taught some staff about the Portuguese Sign Language and that her initiative increased their awareness about the use of sign language. She also reported that other staff in the association learned from her about Portugal as a result of a presentation she gave about her country when she discussed similarities and differences with the Romanian culture.
- A Turkish ex-volunteer reported that the host organisation is using the outputs of his voluntary work, namely the video he produced interviewing locals and the welcome letters he translated in Turkish for new volunteers from Turkey.
- In the UK, intercultural learning was also noted as beneficial to the hosting organisation and for the staff working there in enriching the knowledge of staff and the diversity of the organisation. This was particularly notable because of the rural community within which the volunteers were being hosted.

Local organisation story: Turkey

In Turkey, most of the staff in the case study organisation benefit from the intercultural learning environment and have learnt new methods and tools from volunteers. They also learned about new cultures, perspectives and values of different cultures. Staff reported that they learned how to mentor volunteers and that they now have a better understanding of how to work with young people from different cultural backgrounds.

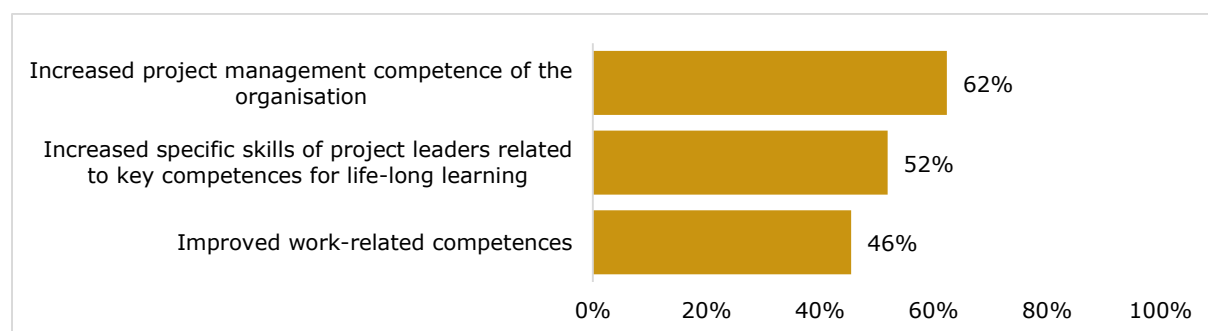
The experience of implementing EVS projects contributed to breaking the stereotypes of staff towards people coming from other cultures. Furthermore, by working together with international volunteers, the staff and local volunteers also learned about new cultures and developed their intercultural communication competences, in particular how to communicate in a clear and non-ambiguous manner with people from other countries. One EVS volunteer in Turkey introduced the staff to French food that they had not known of before, and made them aware of what French people think about different policies and how openly they discuss societal issues.

On the other hand, EVS volunteers currently hosted at the same organisation do not share the same views but believe that the staff are well-travelled and have hosted many EVS volunteers before, meaning that they are now less interested in learning about other cultures. This suggests that there is a learning curve for the staff of the host organisation: in the first years of implementing EVS they are highly interested in discovering new cultures, but this interest somewhat diminishes over time.

Intercultural learning is mutually beneficial both for the EVS volunteer and the hosting organisation; such benefits are long lasting. Interviews pointed to many examples of friendships between volunteers and staff that continue long after the completion of EVS projects. As one project leader in the UK explains, 'these human connections should not be undervalued in terms of the benefits they bring to both the staff and the alumni'. Some project leaders gave concrete examples of EVS alumni who they are still supporting in their endeavours, such as job-seeking, access to education/training or even as NGO partners.

The second substantial impact was identified in the staff skills development and project management skills in particular. Overall, 62% of the surveyed organisations state that their project management competence has increased with EVS participation (see Figure 4-3). Moreover, 52% of organisations also acknowledge a positive impact on the key competence levels of project leaders, and nearly half (46%) see improvements in other work-related competences among their staff.

Figure 4-86 Perceived impact of EVS on the competence and skills of organisations' workers



Q: Which effects did the project have on your organisation/group/body? (multiple response)
n = 1 377

In all three areas of impact, the shares are the highest for organisations that both send and receive volunteers (and lowest for those that only receive), as well as for organisations from Eastern Europe, where 70% state that their project management competence improved. In contrast, organisations from Western Europe are the most sceptical, with only 23% of them perceiving an increase in their work-related competence.

Literature review also showed that hosting volunteers, in particular foreign volunteers, supports the competence development of the organisation's staff (Mieñkowska-Norkiene, 2011). Project leaders and youth workers involved in EVS projects reported increases in all eight key competences for lifelong learning, with the strongest increase being on the intercultural competence and communication in foreign languages (RAY, 2012). Project leaders also learn better to coordinate volunteers and to manage international projects. In 2011, 52% of youth workers in EVS and 55% of EVS organisations surveyed reported a definite increase in project management competence as a result of EVS projects (European Commission, 2011b). In addition, by hosting a volunteer with specific skills that the staff might not have, the organisation's staff can acquire new knowledge and practical skills and become more motivated to improve them, such as in the case of perfecting their foreign language skills (Euroopa Nooerd, 2013).

Case studies also show how the participation in EVS projects supports the competence development of the organisation's staff in three key areas: project management, language skills and technical skills relevant to youth work. Improvement in staff's **project management** skills was particularly emphasised by those alumni who were among the first EVS volunteers whom the organisation hosted. They believe that their feedback helped the project leaders learn how to better prepare and manage EVS projects, and how to allocate tasks to volunteers.

This was also demonstrated in the following case study examples:

- A volunteer in Turkey reported that, thanks to her feedback about the EVS project, the organisation adopted some changes in the way it organises and manages EVS projects and the tasks allocated to EVS volunteers. Project leaders confirmed that the volunteers' feedback helps to improve concrete aspects of EVS projects.
- A project leader at an EVS organisation in France explained that the pre-departure training has benefited from new topics and activities thanks to volunteers' feedback. Increase in staff's project management skills and specific technical skills are concrete examples reported by ex-EVS volunteers. For example, the staff had to learn how to manage EVS volunteers and how to allocate tasks to the volunteers. Staff also gained from the knowledge and skills with the volunteer comes, i.e. how to develop tourism plans for the village.
- In Romania, for the NGO in the case study, the quality criteria and procedures used for implementing EVS projects inspired the development of the association's working procedures. Additionally, based on the lessons learnt from EVS projects – both good practices and failures – the staff further developed their project management skills. They created a booklet on how to organise the selection of EVS volunteers and they improved the preparation of volunteers for EVS mobility. Furthermore, the organisation started using the procedures learnt from EVS projects for implementing other local and national projects by following the same steps of preparing, implementing, evaluating and following up activities.

By hosting volunteers with **technical skills** that the staff might not have, the organisation's staff can also acquire new knowledge and practical skills relevant to their youth work. Hosting EVS volunteers has proven to have a learning effect on youth work,

which can increase the capacity of the organisation to better respond to young people's needs. Case study examples for this aspect include:

- One volunteer mentioned that with her knowledge of Youthpass she helped the staff develop and better use this tool in the EU youth projects they organise.
- Another volunteer reported that he shared his technical expertise by teaching staff on the development of tourism plans.
- The youth workers interviewed in Portugal reported learning from EVS volunteers on how to use social media and different IT software programmes.
- In Romania, the staff of the organisation learned specific technical skills from the EVS volunteers (e.g. how to use cloud to store information, photography and video skills, sign language, dancing and singing, among others).
- In Turkey, youth workers reported learning about different work methods, tools and approaches to youth work. In particular, thanks to EVS projects, they learned to work with young people on a one-to-one basis as opposed to leaning through group activities alone. In concrete terms, youth workers embraced the EVS mentorship system and integrated it into the organisational culture to offer mentoring to staff and local volunteers.
- In the Ukraine, case study organisation staff benefited from new skills brought in by EVS volunteers. For example, the organisation's bookkeeper learnt how to prepare documents in English for foreign partners.

Learning from EVS volunteers tends to benefit all staff in the organisation, including those in management positions, who learn from hosting volunteers from backgrounds unfamiliar to them. For example, the director of a Roma community centre in Portugal found that the Roma EVS volunteer they hosted had an event greater impact on himself and his staff than on the beneficiaries. Since the volunteer was an activist on Roma rights, he taught the staff about the situation of Roma people in other countries. The impact on the staff was so great that the volunteer was seen as a 'consultant' who gave positive feedback and encouraged them to see that 'they are not doing worse' compared to other Roma community centres across Europe.

Both volunteers and members of staff of host organisations believe that EVS projects enhanced staff's **language competences**. By working with volunteers on a daily basis in English, youth workers and project leaders improve their English. Several case study examples show this:

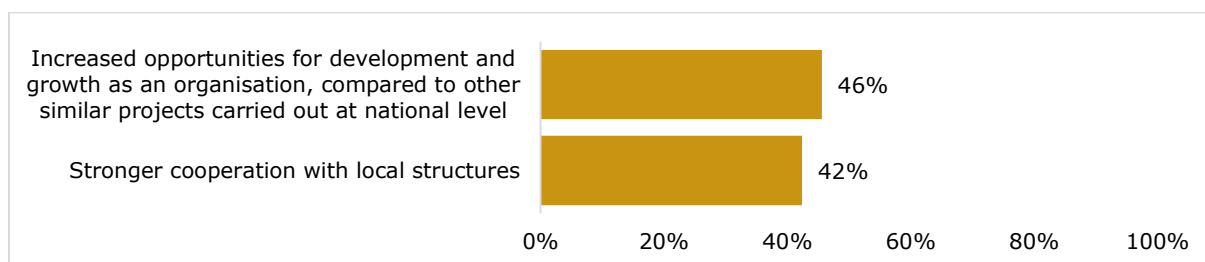
- In Hungary, the staff have also been able to improve their English language skills; and by now all of them are able to express themselves clearly.
- Since participating in EVS, the receiving organisation in Estonia has largely benefitted in terms of improving their language skills. As the interviewed former head of the youth centre explained, her English has improved a lot since hosting EVS volunteers.
- One volunteer in Portugal has helped raise the English level of the organisation's publications by proofreading the materials.
- In the Ukraine, the main advantages for the hosting organisation from involvement in EVS include increasing language skills of staff members. For instance, some of them learnt how to speak Polish, because there were philologists among the EVS volunteers.

'Meeting so many EVS volunteers, some of whom became my friends, motivates me to go on EVS in the future'
EVS project leader, France, 2016

However, staff of the host organisation can also learn other languages through frequent interaction with EVS volunteers. One former volunteer gave French classes to her Turkish mentor. Another ex-volunteer recalls that the staff learned some Serbian, to such an extent that when her parents came to visit 'they were impressed about how much Serbian ECOS staff and volunteers knew'.

A third area of organisational EVS impact is **building the capacity of organisations and, in this way, to facilitating their development**. Representatives of nearly half of the surveyed EVS organisations feel that EVS has brought greater opportunities for development and growth compared to other similar projects at national level (46%) and that their cooperation with local bodies has been strengthened (42%) (see Figure 4-4).

Figure 4-87 Perceived impact of EVS on organisations regarding development, growth and cooperation



Q: Which effects did the project have on your organisation/group/body? (multiple response)
n = 1 377

Only 29% of Western European organisations believe that their opportunities for development have increased with EVS participation, compared to more than half of Eastern European organisations. The impact on development and growth is also perceived as stronger among smaller organisations (46%) compared to larger ones (35%). In addition, 48% of the Northern European organisations confirm stronger cooperation with local structures.

The organisations presented in the case studies are examples of how EVS can play a key role in the development of an organisation:

- The representative of an EVS organisation in France explains: 'EVS is one part of our professional identity; it is in our genetic code. As soon as we founded the organisation, we started using EVS because it is a concrete way to realise our ambitions with good support from the National Agency ... We evolved together with EVS, while we also adapted EVS to our own objectives and tools.'
- In the Estonian case study, the youth centre has also evolved over the years as a result of EVS. For example, the organisation now has an apartment from the local government which volunteers stay in every year. This was not previously the case, as volunteers used to have to move a few times before the organisation got this apartment. In addition, the youth centre has plans to continue evolving. The success of implementing EVS projects has inspired the Youth Centre to potentially take on one more volunteer. The interviewed former head of the youth centre explained that: 'we have one private school and one high school, so we are trying to take on one more volunteer to help in the schools'. This demonstrates how this host organisation plans to gradually expand even further in its implementation of EVS projects, having already increased its intake of volunteers from one to two.
- In Turkey, through EVS projects they learned and practiced working with young people on an individual basis rather than working with them in groups. Thanks to EVS they developed their capacity to provide mentorship. It has now become part of the organizational culture to offer mentorship to local volunteers.

With improved capacity, EVS organisations are also better equipped to improve the depth and breadth of their youth work.

Organisation impact story: Italy

An example in this regard is the case of Anffas, an organisation in Italy that joined EVS in 1997. Since then, Anffas has grown in terms of staff numbers and its offer of services. As a representative of Anffas explains: 'Over the last 20 years, Anffas has gone from employing very few staff to employing 170 people (EVS volunteers excluded) and from a relatively small building to a brand new building with much more space for activities. While these changes cannot be entirely attributed to EVS, the activities conducted in these new spaces, the number and variety of national and international partner organisations that Anffas works with as well as the increase in visibility in the local area are related to our participation in EVS.

Since Anffas has been involved in EVS, it has had various opportunities to meet new organisations and exchange tools and methodologies. Involvement in the EVS network also opened up for Anffas a world of opportunities in other international European projects. In fact, Anffas has since been involved in other international exchange programs such as those under the Leonardo da Vinci action. Taking part in organising and implementing intercultural activities in Pordenone has greatly raised the profile of Anffas in the local area. This is thanks to the involvement with schools but also due to the numerous activities organised with local businesses and cultural organisations, such as 'cultural aperitifs' and 'conversation evenings'. The result is an increase in the organisation's profile within the community and at the same time it also changed the organisation's profile which became associated to more diverse contexts (intercultural and European activities) and not just to assistance to people with disabilities.

EVS has also helped increase the number and quality of activities provided by Anffas to residents. Sending volunteers abroad has given Anffas the possibility to travel and visit other projects as well as to interact with other service providers. This, in turn, has given them the possibility to learn about different workshops and techniques in working with disadvantaged people. Since Anffas got involved with EVS it has increased the number of activities provided also thanks to discoveries made via networking activities with the organisations that host the volunteers they send through EVS and via inputs from the volunteers themselves.

Since joining EVS, Anffas has become more involved in the organisation of events promoting different cultures and languages in the local area. Anffas has also been involved in the promotion of volunteering among local schools, which ultimately raised its profile in the community and brought new partnerships with local structures. Just recently, Anffas signed a partnership deal with the Italian Union of the Blind and with the radio station 'voice in the desert' to host a 100% blind EVS volunteer and disseminate the experience via the radio and other events.

The interviewees from Anffas believe that socially disadvantaged volunteers bring a lot of value to their activities and to the profile of their organisation and that if it were easier to send and receive disadvantaged volunteers, there would be an even greater impact on the organisation.

Overall, the organisations involved in EVS typically increase their capacity in three ways.

Increase in resources (mainly human and financial resources) that benefit small NGOs in particular

EVS projects bring additional resources that build the capacity of small, local NGOs especially. The most important impact on the receiving organisations is indeed the

increase in capacity to offer more and better services (projects or activities) thanks to the additional resources brought in by the EVS volunteers. This was confirmed by all stakeholders interviewed: volunteers, project leaders and local partners.

'Without the help of the EVS volunteers we would not be able to run our current services. We have no full-time staff and so we rely on volunteers to function. EVS volunteers are more committed and reliable than local volunteers who are hard to find or keep interested in a project in this rural area'

EVS project leader UK

The literature review also showed that volunteers provide additional labour support for the organisation's daily activities and play a supportive role assisting staff members – they "give an extra pair of hands to the staff" (Hamilton, 1998; Pantea, 2013; Mieñkowska-Norkiene, 2011). Secondly, volunteers fill gaps in activities or services that cannot be fully covered by the staff and, in this way, enable the provision of services that might not be possible otherwise (Handy & Greespan, 2009; Edwards, 2001). In particular, the human and time resources brought in by EVS volunteers build the capacity of small

organisations that cannot afford to employ full-time staff. For example, for the Garden Science Trust, a local charity in England that works only with local volunteers (no paid professionals), having several EVS volunteers working full-time on projects means they could run more activities than beforehand. This was particularly important to them as the project is in a rural area where it is difficult to find local volunteers.

Thus, in practice EVS volunteers fill gaps in activities or services that cannot be fully covered by the organisation's staff. This is demonstrated by the following case study examples:

- In Estonia, hosting the EVS volunteers has provided the receiving EVS organisation with additional human resources in order to complete daily tasks.
- In Italy, EVS has also helped increase the number and quality of activities provided by the case study organisation. Sending volunteers abroad has given the organisation the possibility to travel and visit other projects as well as to interact with other service providers. This, in turn, has given them the possibility to learn about different workshops and techniques in working with disadvantaged people. Since the organisation got involved with EVS, it has increased the number of activities provided also thanks to discoveries made via networking activities with the organisations that host the volunteers they send through EVS and via inputs from the volunteers themselves.
- In Romania, the biggest changes experienced by the NGO thanks to EVS has been broadening the range of topics they work on, expanding the profile of youth involved in their activities and widening its network of local partners. This was only possible due to the additional human resources that EVS volunteers brought to the organisation. As reported by the Vice-President, the NGO started its activities in 2010 while having only two members of staff and working exclusively with children in orphanages. After obtaining the EVS accreditation, the NGO started hosting more and more EVS volunteers and for longer periods of mobility – from 8-9 months to 12 months. This enabled the creation of more projects to meet the needs of the local community, such as to include schools, high-schools and kindergartens in rural areas. 'Over time, more local institutions have been asking to host volunteers from our side. We try to develop new partnerships and to maintain and improve the ones we already have', said the Vice-President.
- One EVS volunteer initiated workshops for Roma children and women at a community centre in Faro, Portugal. The director of the centre explained that the staff of the centre have many ideas for activities, but they usually have neither time nor capacity to realise these activities on their own. The view of the director was that 'without the EVS volunteers, the workshop activities couldn't be done'.

'The structure and grants of the EVS programme have been an engine for the organisation's capacity-building in the past years'

EVS organisation, Germany, 2016

Therefore, thanks to EVS, the Roma community centre has more capacity to organise new activities and implement new ways of working with Roma people.

- In Serbia, the main impact on the EVS receiving organisation is reflected in the availability of higher amount of resources (human, financial, time) which otherwise would not have been available. EVS volunteers were able to contribute to the organisation's everyday activities by providing counselling services (based on their own experience) for future interested EVS volunteers. Furthermore, EVS volunteers provided input into the tasks which the organisation did not have sufficient time and resources to do them on their own (e.g. updating the database on volunteers participating in international camps). Since the organisation manages around 1,000 volunteers from Serbia and from abroad (through work camps), EVS volunteers are a great help in providing support in organising and managing such a large number of volunteers. Other tasks of EVS volunteers involve: initiating first contact with the volunteer, providing support in filling in and sending the application forms, arranging the pre-departure preparations, conducting evaluations upon return from work camps – in general, the whole procedure.
- In the UK, the most important impact on the receiving organisation is that they are able to run an increased service. Interviewees suggested that without the help of the EVS volunteers they would not be able to run their current services saying 'we wouldn't be able to function. It's as simple as that'. In comparison to non-EVS volunteers the EVS volunteers were seen to be more committed and reliable than other volunteers and therefore they played a particularly important role in the organisation. This was particularly notable because the project was in a rural area where it was hard to find UK volunteers. It was also suggested that working with disabled individuals is a challenging role so needs full commitment from volunteers.

Beyond providing additional human resources, the structure, funding and tools that the EVS programme makes available to the participating organisations also contribute to building their capacity.

New ideas and perspectives brought in by EVS volunteers

'Volunteers are a motor of innovation for our activities ... Each volunteer with their individual cultural background brings in new ideas and talents into the project'

**EVS project leader,
Germany, 2016**

Host organisations benefit from the fresh ideas that EVS volunteers bring to regular activities. The literature review showed how EVS volunteers often bring new ideas, new youth work practices and inspiration to the host organisation (GHK, 2010; Mieñkowska-Norkiene, 2011; Euroopa Noored, 2013). Evidence shows that staff in hosting organisations often learn better from EVS volunteers new methods of working with young people and how to foster non-formal learning in youth work (ECORYS, 2007; RAY, 2012; ECORYS, 2011; European Commission, 2001; RAY, 2015a). A recent study on the impact

of EVS projects taking place in schools in Estonia (Euroopa Noored, 2013) found that the majority of teachers reported that the volunteer brought fresh ideas to regular activities, some new tools and helped the school to better their everyday functioning. Teachers also reported an increased awareness and use of non-formal education methods, which continued after the volunteer had left. They also became more interested in voluntary activities. The study found that those members of staff having the closest and more frequent contact with the volunteer (teachers) gained the most from the experience while the impact on others (the school management) was low.

The case study examples confirm these findings. For example, in Portugal, EVS volunteers used social media to promote activities and interviewed locals for a documentary they filmed. In Hungary, several of the activities would not have been possible (or only partially possible) without the help of the EVS volunteers. Given the

very strong connection and excellent relationship between the organisation hosting the EVS volunteers and the local municipality, the EVS volunteers also support a number of the town's initiatives, such as cleaning the neighbourhood around the river or organising events for the elderly. In the UK, new activities were added to a garden and crafts club based on the ideas proposed by EVS volunteers.

EVS volunteers also bring in an outside perspective on the work of the organisation, which can be a refreshing experience that leads to organisational development. For instance, EVS volunteers can bring a new or different approach to existing activities. The director of a Roma community centre in Portugal explained how beneficial it is to have someone from outside coming into the Roma community with plenty of motivation and new ideas.

'I think that it is good that somebody from outside comes in and points at the strengths or challenges of the organisation. The outside perspective can influence how to do things differently and motivate the organisation to change'

EVS volunteer, Portugal,

The different perspectives brought in by volunteers can thus motivate the organisation to reflect on its work, existing routines and processes. Over time, this can lead to the organisation becoming more open to new methods and new perspectives:

- At one organisation in Portugal, volunteers were involved in staff meetings, which were held in English, and this enabled them to contribute with ideas on how to improve internal procedures. A concrete example is the 'ECOS lunch and practice', which was initiated as a space to debate the internal working rules of the organisation.
- In Serbia, according to the leader of the hosting organisation, "it always happens that they [volunteers] leave something new based on the initiatives and ideas they had – for example, one volunteer realised that YRS did not have sufficient capacity to deal with promotional activities, and therefore organised a Working Group of volunteers who participated in the work camps abroad and who wanted to help in promotional activities – that was in 2009 and the group is still active today and is very independent". The EVS volunteers also introduced Twitter and Instagram to the organisation's promotion activities. EVS volunteers implemented ideas on how they could contribute to organisation's activities by offering something new for what they realised there is a need for (e.g. language cafés, video for promotion campaign). These new perspectives of inputs resulted in outputs which remained sustainable even after the EVS volunteers returned back home.
- In Turkey, due to EVS volunteers, staff members have been introduced to and implemented different youth work tools, methods and approaches.
- Staff at a local charity in the UK also reported how explaining their internal processes with each new group of volunteers encourages them to review and revise these processes on a regular basis. They bring new ideas to the organisation including different approaches to crafts and new activities and they help to inform service users' development plans. They are often well placed to make suggestions because of the close relationship that they develop with the service users
- In the Ukrainian case study, EVS volunteers had an impact in providing practical examples of the issues they advocate for coming from other countries – such as integration of people with disabilities into society. EVS volunteers are presented as role models for young people from the local community in terms of the volunteers' work, development, growth and contribution to the organisation. In addition, former EVS volunteers maintain contact with the organisation and become engaged in joint activities as partners or volunteers.

For some host organisations, EVS also contributes to the better structuring of work, as EVS volunteers need more structure than other staff or volunteers, which incites the

organisation to improve the way it structures its work, projects, activities and even individual tasks.

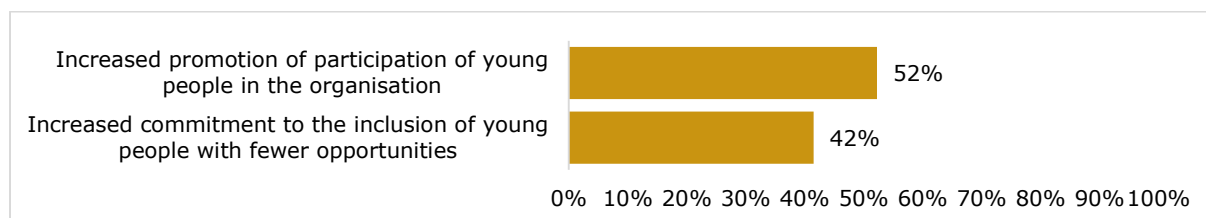
There is also evidence of EVS volunteers helping hosting organisations to reflect on the needs of the local community. For example, EVS volunteers in Faro, Portugal, organised 'impressions of Faro' to collect ideas and feedback from locals, which then could be used by the organisation to design new projects tailored to the current needs and interests of the locals.

Good practices and know-how learned from the EVS partner organisations

Cooperation on EVS projects between organisations from different countries reinforces the transfer of know-how and good practices between organisations. One organisation in Italy that has been involved in EVS since 1997 reported that EVS brought various opportunities for collaboration with organisations in its field of work, which allowed for a fruitful exchange of tools and methodologies. In particular, the organisation benefited from the inputs that the EVS partner organisations brought in relation to working tools and methods in the field of social care with people with disabilities.

Finally, about half of the surveyed EVS organisations (52%) (see Figure 4-5) state that EVS participation has helped them to **strengthen the bond between the organisation and young people** following their EVS participation, in particular in the case of organisations that both send and receive volunteers, as well as organisations from Southern Europe (56% in both cases). In addition, 42% of organisations state that EVS has had a particular impact on commitment to the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities, again especially in the case of the two abovementioned groups (48% and 47% respectively).

Figure 4-88 Perceived impact of EVS on relationship between organisations and young people



Q: Which effects did the project have on your organisation/group/body? (multiple response)
n = 1 377

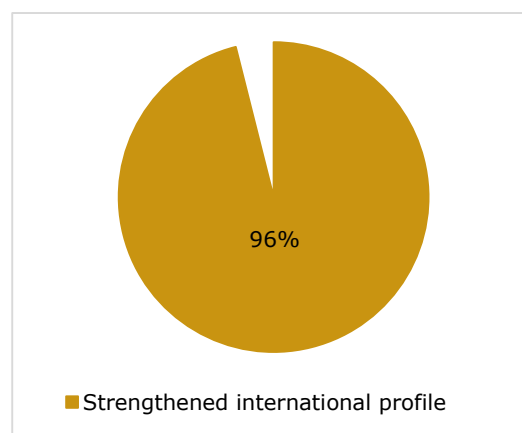
The literature review also showed that the presence of young volunteers makes the atmosphere warmer and the culture of the organisation more youth-friendly atmosphere (Haski-Leventhal et al., 2008; Mieñkowska-Norkiene 2011; Euroopa Nooerd, 2013). On the one hand, this signals the trustworthiness of the organisation in the eyes of beneficiaries, which is of key importance for example in reaching the hard-to-reach young people at risk of social exclusion (Haski-Leventhal et al., 2008). On the other hand, volunteer participation builds support for the organisation's governance structure and operations, thus contributing to its sustainability (Handy & Greespan, 2009). Furthermore, volunteer participation in the organisation's activities and events enhances the public image, reputation and legitimacy of the organisation in the community. A particular attraction point of the EVS is that it promotes cultural diversity in the organisations' activities. In this way, EVS volunteers raise the profile of the hosting organisations and make them more attractive to potential local volunteers and potential

new beneficiaries (Mieñkowska-Norkiene, 2011; ECORYS, 2007; GHK, 2010; Pantea, 2013).

EVS impacts on the internationalisation of organisations

EVS brings a strong international character to the work of participating organisations. **Almost all (96%) of the EVS organisations believe that EVS has strengthened their international** profile (see Figure 4-6). The proportion is somewhat lower (90%) for organisations from Western Europe; it is close to 100% among organisations from Southern Europe and those that both send and receive volunteers. It is also especially high among those organisations with fewer than 10 employees.

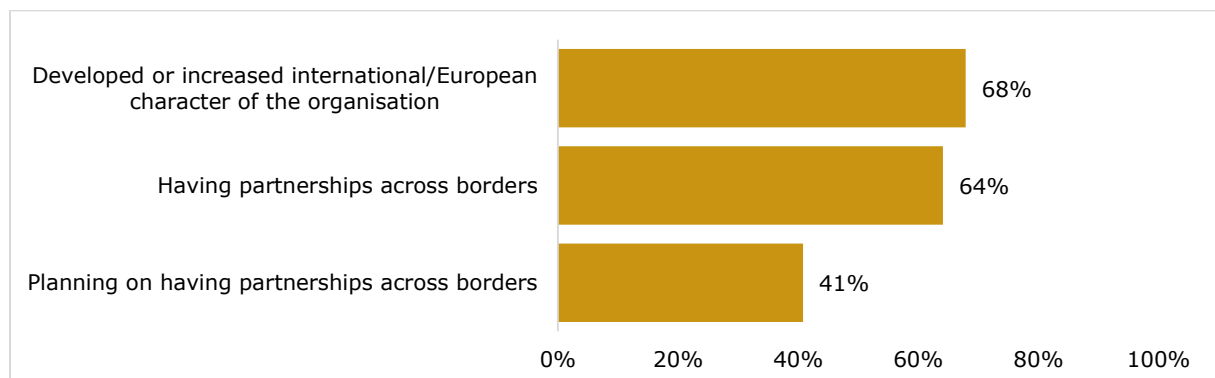
Figure 4-89 Perceived impact of EVS on the international profile of organisations



Q: Do you consider the EVS programme to strengthen the international profile of your organisation?
n = 1 374

Specifically, 68% of the organisations believe that their international/European character has developed and increased through participation in EVS (see Figure 4-7). Two thirds (64%) declare that EVS has helped them to establish partnerships across borders and 41% plan to create such partnerships in the future. Receiving-only organisations are more sceptical in this respect, as only half believe that EVS has brought them new international partners.

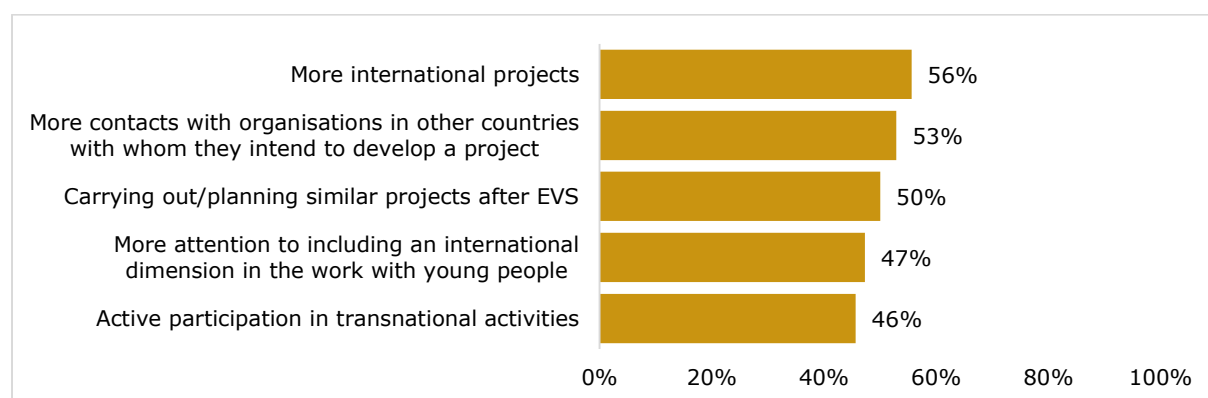
Figure 4-90 Perceived impact of EVS on international partnerships of organisations



Question: Which effects did the project have on your organisation/group/body? (multiple response)
n = 1 377

In addition, as a result of participation in EVS, 56% of organisations have increased their involvement in international projects and 53% state that they have established new contacts with international partners with whom they can cooperate in the future (see Figure 4-8). Nearly half (47%) pay more attention to including an international dimension in their work with young people following involvement in EVS. In most of these aspects, the impact is perceived as weaker by organisations in Northern and Western Europe and by receiving-only organisations, while organisations in Southern Europe and those both sending and receiving volunteers perceive these effects more often.

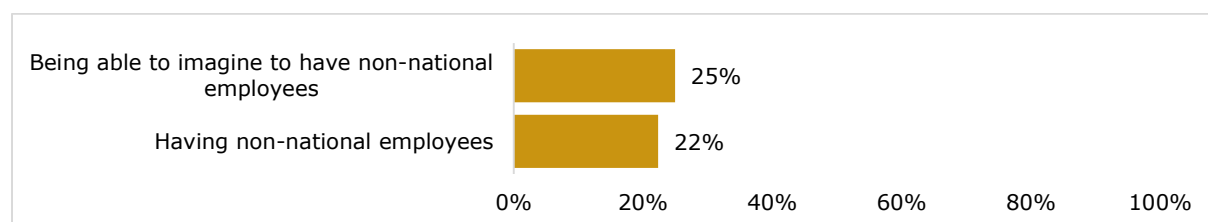
Figure 4-91 Perceived impact of EVS on participation of organisations in international projects



Q: Which effects did the project have on your organisation/group/body? (multiple response)
n = 1 377

The least frequent impact reported is the actual composition of the staff of participating organisations. Only 22% report having employees of a different nationality thanks to EVS and only a quarter (25%) are able to envisage employing non-nationals; both these aspects are even weaker for sending-only organisations (see Figure 4-9).

Figure 4-92 Perceived impact of EVS on the international composition of organisations' staff



Q: Which effects did the project have on your organisation/group/body? (multiple response) n = 1 377

Literature and interviews with youth workers and project leaders confirm that their organisations gained international contacts and started new partnerships thanks to their involvement in EVS projects. This is based on the cooperation they

'The number and variety of national and international partners we have today is due to our involvement in EVS'
EVS organisation, Italy, 2016

have established with organisations from other countries with which they collaborate on EVS projects.

Literature review suggests that, similarly to other Youth in Action projects, EVS projects make it possible for small local organisations to get involved in European activities and, in

turn, to develop partnerships and contacts with organisations from other countries (RAY, 2012; RAY, 2014; ECORYS, 2007; ECORYS, 2011). This translates into increased opportunities for transnational cooperation leading to a higher number of international projects. For example, the results of a 2011 monitoring survey (European Commission, 2011b) show that 52% of the surveyed EVS organisations reported that, thanks to EVS, they made more contacts with organisations from other countries and 85% were planning to participate in similar projects in the future. The majority of surveyed youth workers involved in EVS also reported that, after EVS, they got involved in partnerships or networks providing opportunities for future co-operation (ECORYS, 2011). In turn, cooperation between organisations from different countries reinforces the transfer of know-how and good practices between organisations and leads to improved capacity-building and enhanced quality of youth work (European Commission, 2001).

For the organisations that already had international partners, participation in EVS expanded their network and brought in contacts in new countries:

- The director of an organisation in France reported that EVS has brought many new partners in other European countries and other continents. The organisation also uses the contacts it developed through EVS to run projects in other mobility programmes, such as the French civic service and the EU Aid Volunteers.
- In Germany, the multicultural atmosphere and the intercultural dialogue facilitated by the influx of EVS volunteers are perceived very positively by the organisation. It provides them with a strong international profile, thus attracting new partners and volunteers and supporting the brand of IJGD. The responsible at IJGD noted, 'the EVS accreditation has made it easier to acquire new community projects and to establish local partnerships, not just for the EVS, but also for our other programmes'.
- In Turkey, the staff also gained experience in working with international partners while expanding their capacities. The EVS experience allowed the organisation to establish a bigger and stronger network of international partners, gaining important information about the Erasmus + programme. In particular, the organisation finds the EVS process more helpful than short-term actions. For instance, in a 5-day training course they do not deal with their partners on a long-term basis, but during EVS projects they do. They also find SOHO training modules very useful as these modules also contribute and support the networking processes.

Besides gaining international partners, **organisations participating in EVS also learn how to work with their partners, who may have different approaches**. The long-term nature of collaboration enables them to learn how to work with international partners and to adopt a more inclusive approach. One project leader at an organisation in Turkey reported that thanks to cooperation with various partners in EVS projects, staff can now better manage work with partners that have different viewpoints, working styles and approaches.

Most of the new contacts and partnerships are brought in directly by former EVS volunteers who continue to have a strong connection with their host NGO even after completing their EVS. This is due to the long-lasting contacts that the host organisation establishes with the volunteers it hosts. Interviewees provided many examples of EVS alumni who upon their return home facilitated contacts between the host and sending organisation, or with other NGOs in their home community, and by doing so **enabled the realisation of new transnational youth projects**:

- One French ex-volunteer reported still being in contact with the organisation that hosted her during her EVS in Turkey. She continues to help the organisation in finding French participants for the EU youth exchanges they organise; she also plans to develop a youth exchange project in France in collaboration with the Turkish host organisation.

- One concrete example is a volunteer from Ukraine who did an EVS at an improvisation theatre in Faro, Portugal, and after returning home 'opened the doors' for cooperation between the host organisation and theatre NGOs in Ukraine. In the end, this resulted in international youth exchanges between the two parties.

The international contacts and projects facilitated by the EVS alumni do not benefit the host organisation alone; they also benefit the sending organisation.

One EVS ex-volunteer from the UK reported that he established a close cooperation between his sending and hosting organisations, which benefited the sending organisation by expanding its work in the field and attracting more volunteers to do their EVS in Germany.

'The EVS accreditation has made it easier to acquire new community projects and to establish local partnerships, not just for the EVS, but also for our other programmes'

**EVS organisation,
Germany, 2016**

The strong international profile that organisations gain through participation in EVS projects raises their visibility and reputation in the community. This has been confirmed in interviews with all stakeholders: EVS volunteers, organisation staff and local partners. This is particularly important for smaller and grassroots

organisations. The reputation gained helps the organisation to attract new local partners and volunteers:

- Project leaders at an organisation in Germany believe that EVS accreditation raises the profile of the organisation and enables it to attract not only volunteers and local partners for EVS but also for their other community projects.
- EVS helped the organisation in Hungary to broaden its scope of activities, and to become recognised not only at the local level, but also at national and international levels. The EVS programme has been crucial to the growth of the organisation and helping it with becoming what it is today. An interviewed member of staff expressed how EVS had, and still has, a "multiplier effect". Each volunteer has helped the organisation to expand its network and to find partners for other European projects. More concretely, participating in EVS has resulted in several projects under LLP and YiA programmes. Furthermore, the organisation has been involved in four KA2 Erasmus+ projects. The association has built an excellent reputation within the youth sector in Hungary and is being frequently approached by representatives of other NGOs who would like their help with planning, preparing and submitting project proposals and running projects. The knowledge and know-how they possess has made the association a nationally recognised example, which is also supported by the fact that the Hungarian National Agency for the EVS is also very aware of the work of the organisation. According to one staff member, through EVS "a small youth organisation located in a remote village can become more visible and widely known across Hungary".
- In Romania, Thanks to the EVS projects that they implemented, Team for Youth gained visibility at local level and became known as the biggest organisation involved in EVS in the city of Baia Mare. The NGO also gained recognition at national level from the Ministry of Youth and enjoys a good cooperation with the National Agency and with Eurodesk. With the occasion of celebrating 20 years of EVS, the association organised a full-day workshop to inform youth and raise awareness about EVS, which was attended by over 80 participants coming from different cities in the north of Romania.

EVS projects make it possible to extend outreach at local level through a multiplier effect. In particular, EVS volunteers reach out to young people at local level and liaise with other local organisations. For instance, EVS volunteers promote the activities and local projects of the organisation. EVS volunteers in Poland believe that by promoting EVS in local schools, they raised local people's awareness about the host organisation's activities and its main mission, hence increasing its visibility and profile in the community. In Italy,

Anffas has also been involved in the promotion of volunteering among local schools, which ultimately raised its profile in the community and brought new partnerships with local structures. Just recently, Anffas signed a partnership deal with the Italian Union of the Blind and with the radio station 'voice in the desert' to host a 100% blind EVS volunteer and disseminate the experience via the radio and other events.

The enhanced visibility that EVS participation brings to organisations opens up new partnerships with local structures with which they had not collaborated previously. An organisation in Portugal enlarged its network of local partners through EVS projects that also facilitated contact with the municipality. An NGO in Germany acquired new local partners to offer language courses for all its volunteers and to provide them with discounted tickets for cultural activities such as museums. Similarly, an organisation in Italy signed a partnership with the Italian Union of the Blind and with a radio station to host visually impaired EVS volunteers and disseminate their experience via radio.

The visibility of the work carried out by the EVS organisation in cooperation with local partners can contribute to the political recognition of the NGO at local level. This is the case for ECOS, a local organisation in Faro, Portugal, which has been involved in EVS since 2012 and over the last five years has developed a broad network of local partners involved in the EVS projects it coordinates. According to the local partners interviewed as well as the representatives of the organisation, ECOS is now recognised for its success in bringing a European dimension to youth projects at local level and for its key role in supporting local NGOs in capacity-building. ECOS is considered as a pioneer in youth participation and structured dialogue in the region of Algarve. Building on this good practice, ECOS is working together with local authorities to implement local youth councils and to develop local and regional youth policies such as 'Algarve 2020 – A Contract for Youth'. In Poland, school visits that were their main projects took place outside the Foundation. In case of the latter, they think they raised more awareness about the Foundation's activities and its main mission, hence increasing visibility of the organisation in the community.

The local level impacts of EVS were also raised in the stakeholder seminar organised during the study where the stakeholders expressed the view that the EVS projects should be designed in a way to articulate with the needs of the local community and the impact on this level should be planned as an integrative part of the project.

4.2.2 Support factors

This section examines the factors that support the impact of EVS on participating organisations. As already identified above, EVS tends to have a larger impact on small, grassroots NGOs than on large associations. This is partially due to the relative value of additional resources on the capacity of small NGOs, but interactions also tend to be easier and more personal in small organisations, where more staff members have an opportunity to meet the volunteers on a regular and direct basis.

Literature and case study interviews revealed six key factors that support the impact of EVS on the participating organisations, both on the individual level in terms of the professional development of staff, and on the organisational level on building capacity and fostering organisational development:

- nature of contact with EVS volunteers (direct v. indirect);
- size of the organisation (small v. large);
- duration of EVS projects (short v. long);
- structure and grants of EVS projects;
- support from the EVS coordinating organisation;
- support from the National Agency.

Direct contact with EVS volunteers maximises impact on youth workers and project leaders

The impact of EVS is stronger on those staff members who directly interact with EVS volunteers throughout the project (e.g. the EVS coordinators and mentors), because they are frequently in contact with the volunteers regarding a variety of issues. The representatives of some EVS organisations believe that the impact of EVS on the organisation can be expanded by putting more staff members in direct contact with the volunteers that they host. One organisation in Turkey, TOG, reported the good practice of rotating EVS volunteers to support different teams within the organisation every week. In this way, it believes that more staff have the opportunity to learn from volunteers, while volunteers also learn more from the different staff with whom they interact.

The smaller the organisation, the bigger the impact of EVS

The size of the organisation plays a role in the extent to which EVS has an impact on the organisation's staff. The smaller the organisation, the easier it is for all staff to interact directly with EVS volunteers on a daily basis and thus to learn from them, be it new skills, a new language or a new culture.

The impact of EVS is also more visible on smaller organisations. In France, an organisation sends hundreds of volunteers abroad through EVS reported positive experiences working with small NGOs, where volunteers can see the impact they have on the organisation. They also reported that collaborating on EVS projects is easier with smaller NGOs while the contrary is true of large organisations that host many volunteers. Due to the problems they faced in the past with such large organisations, the NGO now prefers working with small organisations when hosting their volunteers abroad.

'We prefer to work with small NGOs because volunteers can see the impact they have on the organisation and it is also easier to work with them. The activities are more interesting and the support is warmer and better ... All problems we had were with large EVS factories. In our experience, working with large organisations that host many volunteers, even 30-40 volunteers at once, is challenging because they lack the support needed for mentoring'

EVS project leader, France, 2016

The length of EVS projects facilitates long-term cooperation between organisations

'EVS is a difficult process and all partners gain very different capacities to be able to work with each other over a long time period'

EVS project leader, Turkey, 2016

The long-term nature of collaboration between partner organisations involved in EVS projects provides more opportunities for learning exchanges and capacity-building. In this regard, many of the project leaders interviewed found the long-term cycle of EVS projects more helpful for their organisational development than short-term actions. Comparing the benefits obtained through EVS compared to EU youth exchanges or training

courses, one project leader in Germany emphasised how much more intense and longer term the collaboration with partners is on EVS projects, and how this contributes to an enduring networking process among organisations. In Romania, over time, Team for Youth has developed expertise in EVS and has learnt to adapt the projects to obtain the best outcomes for the volunteers and the local people involved. A concrete example is that the association decided to prolong the length of mobility projects from 8 to 12 months in order to give EVS volunteers the possibility to follow not one, but two school years, and thus reach out to more beneficiaries. This change was assessed to be particularly beneficial for the volunteers for whom 'the longer the mobility, the larger the impact, as they have more time to learn', according to the Vice-President of the NGO.

Building on their expertise in EVS, Team for Youth is now planning to develop a project focused solely on sending volunteers abroad and to create a community with the Romanian participants in EVS. The rationale is that, upon their return, Romanian volunteers would help promote EVS and empower other young people to volunteer. In the future, Team for Youth would like to develop volunteering mobility at national level, similarly to 'service civique' in France.

The structure and funding of EVS help to build the capacity of participating organisations

In comparison to other programmes that promote transnational volunteering, EVS stands out because of its structure and funding. This has been identified as a critical support factor by nearly all project leaders interviewed. By channelling the project grant to the organisation and not directly to the volunteer, EVS provides organisational support in addition to support for the volunteer. The financial support that EVS projects bring to the participating organisations builds their capacity and empowers them. Since the project grant is typically managed by the receiving organisations (hosting or coordinating the EVS volunteers), the impact is greater for the latter than for the sending organisation, which receives only a small share of the grant. For the receiving organisations, the funding from the EVS project is a guarantee of resources that helps them build capacity to host volunteers and to implement projects in the community.

'EVS is supporting the organisation and the organisation supports the volunteer from the perspective of the allocation of the budget. For the service civique in France, all the budget is given to the volunteer, who is responsible for finding accommodation and meals'

EVS project leader, France, 2016

'Compared to other programmes, like the Federal Volunteers Service (BFD), the EVS is more structured and better endowed with funds. The support we can offer to EVS volunteers is more holistic than what other funding schemes would allow'

EVS project leader, Germany, 2016

Support from the EVS coordinating organisation

While EVS can have a big impact on small organisations by helping them build capacity, hosting also translates into a higher workload and a bigger risk than for larger organisations. For small, grassroots NGOs, the administrative burden involved in the complex application and reporting procedures for EVS projects is perceived as too high and thus demotivating. If they do manage to apply, they face a high financial risk if EVS vacancies are not filled. The support provided by the coordinating organisation in EVS projects was found to be a key solution in this regard. The coordinating organisation typically handles the administrative issues of the EVS projects – including collaboration with the sending organisation, financial aspects, arranging housing, meals and transportation for volunteers as well as coordinating and mentoring them – and acts as a mediator between the volunteer and the host organisation. In addition, the EVS coordinating organisation can assist small NGOs with the process of obtaining EVS accreditation and help them in matching volunteers with placements.

By supporting small NGOs that lack capacity and expertise to manage the administrative issues associated with EVS projects, the coordinating organisations make it possible to reach out to organisations that are more diverse, and to motivate them to take part in EVS. For example, one local NGO in Portugal, ADS Association, was immediately keen to get involved in EVS, but had no capacity to organise EVS projects on its own. Thus, the partnership with ECOS – a local organisation that coordinates EVS volunteers – made it possible for the organisation to host volunteers as of 2012. Over time, ADS developed expertise and capacity through hosting EVS volunteers and, with the help of ECOS, managed to obtain EVS accreditation and to develop its own EVS projects.

Support offered by the National Agency

A key factor frequently cited in interviews is the strong support provided by the National Agency. The support made available by the agency for organisations in terms of information and assistance can ensure the success of the EVS project, minimise financial risks and maximise the project's impact. In particular, the training modules for sending and hosting organisations (SOHO training) were found useful in building capacity and supporting networking among organisations. In Turkey, the evaluation meetings organised by the National Agency were valued for enabling a joint reflection on the EVS process among mentors, coordinators and project leaders.

'They [National Agency staff] are knowledgeable and always available at the end of the phone'

EVS project leader, Turkey, 2016

On the other hand, mixing new and experienced organisations in the same meetings was found to be less effective. As EVS evolves, new and experienced organisations in EVS

'There is a need for an EVS innovative action to build capacity and opportunity for experienced organisations in EVS to demonstrate what results they obtained through EVS and to build a system that responds to young people's challenges'

EVS project leader, France, 2016

have different needs and expectations that require separate training, tailored to their different profiles. A project leader in Turkey suggested that the National Agency should organise training and evaluation meetings separately for the experienced and less experienced organisations so that the content is adapted to the specific demands. In a similar fashion, a project leader in France proposed that EVS should offer separate opportunities (grants) for experienced organisations and for new applicant organisations. The rationale is that experienced organisations in EVS could

contribute innovative approaches in how to use EVS to respond to societal challenges, e.g. to tackle youth unemployment or integrate refugees.

4.2.3 Obstacles/challenges reducing impact

The earlier sections have shown the impact of EVS at an organisational level. However, it is not always easy to define. For organisations that have been involved in EVS for a long time – some of whom have been involved since EVS was launched in 1996–1997 – it is difficult to distinguish the impact of EVS from the natural evolution of the organisation or to make a comparison with the situation before joining EVS. The same applies to organisations that started organising EVS projects immediately after they were set up and whose mission coincides with the goals of EVS (e.g. to promote European awareness through transnational mobility). One example is the Robert Schuman Foundation in Poland, which has been involved in EVS for 15 years, and finds it 'impossible to make comparisons with the situation before joining the EVS action': 'Besides, our organisation has always been pro-European, hence welcoming and sending participants from/to the EU is something natural.'

Typically, however, the impact of EVS on the participating organisations is perceived to be lower than its actual potential. The main issue appears to be the sub-optimal quality of some EVS projects, which can be explained by three key factors. **Firstly, the quality of EVS projects is not monitored in a systematic manner. Secondly, host organisations tend to lack capacity to ensure consistently high-quality EVS activities. Finally, the sending organisations lack resources to provide high-quality pre-departure preparation and follow-up upon return.**

As for the typical challenges reported in the implementation of EVS projects, these include difficulties in the cooperation between the partner organisations, risks associated with volunteers dropping out and changes in programme regulations.

These challenges are analysed in the sub-sections below.

Table 4-3 Factors hindering the EVS impact on organisations

FACTORS HINDERING IMPACT ON ORGANISATIONS	
OBSTACLES	CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTATION
Lack of monitoring quality	Difficult cooperation between partner organisations
Lack of capacity of HOs	Risks associated to volunteers' dropping out
Insufficient support of SOs	Constant change in the programme regulations

Insufficient monitoring of the quality of EVS projects

Case study interviews indicate that the quality of EVS projects could be further improved. While all agree that the EVS is a well-designed and structured programme, interviewees also pointed out that there is still much to improve in terms of how activities are run and organised in practice. The reason most often cited is the lack of monitoring of projects on the ground in terms of the support provided to the volunteers, the conditions in which volunteers work and live, and how the budget is spent. Proposals on how the quality of EVS projects could be better monitored include the setting of minimum quality standards and inspections at host organisations. The stakeholder seminar

'Some associations are not so well organised and this can make it frustrating for EVS volunteers who have doubts about what they are doing there. I met a lot of EVS volunteers who were disappointed about their experience because they had the feeling that they were there for the money that the organisation receives from the EU. If it was better organised, it would be better, especially for organisations that host many EVS volunteers simultaneously'

EVS project leader, France, 2016

'There are some organisations that don't provide the basics to the volunteers (some not even language courses) and some which don't provide decent living facilities. There is a need to check and control the organisations and make sure the money isn't squandered'

Local NGO, Italy, 2016

organised during the evaluations also highlighted that the monitoring of the quality of EVS projects should be strengthened, but taking a supportive approach (e.g. to advise the organisations on how to improve their projects for hosting volunteers).

Insufficient capacity of receiving organisations

The underlying cause behind the sub-optimal quality of some EVS projects is the lack of skills and capacity to manage EVS projects. Some project leaders believe that EVS is overly focused on the learning process of the EVS volunteer while there is too little focus on building the capacity of the organisation where the volunteer spends most of their time. The poor structure or capacity of the organisation to host volunteers often leads to low-quality tasks for volunteers. This, in turn, generates frustration.

Reinforcing the capacity of host organisations is seen as a way to improve the quality of EVS. Some project leaders even called for a re-focus of EVS support from the volunteer to the host organisation. Concrete proposals on how to increase the capacity of the host organisation to host volunteers include training of mentors, training on

'If the host organisation has no capacity, the quality of the tasks for the volunteer will be low. Volunteers complain about the host organisation not having the structure to host them. While there is a huge focus on the volunteer, the EVS organisation also needs support'

EVS organisation, Portugal, 2016

maximising the impact on the local community and training on supporting volunteers with specific needs. As for increasing the capacity of the sending organisation, concrete proposals include training on how to reach specific target groups and how to prepare them for mobility. Some project leaders believe that for smaller or new applicant organisations, it would be beneficial to have targeted training on issues such budget management, reporting, monitoring and volunteer management.

Two main approaches were identified as to how to support sending organisations and hosting organisations:

- Facilitating opportunities for exchanges and peer support for EVS organisations – the National Agency could fulfil this role by organising regular meetings for EVS-accredited organisations, in addition to the training courses it provides for volunteers (on-arrival, mid-term, evaluation, etc.).
- Strengthening the role of the coordinating organisation (CO) – the idea is that COs could do more to ensure the quality of EVS projects if they were better supported. They could for example facilitate impact on the local community and increase the capacity of small NGOs.

Insufficient support for sending organisations to take up their full role in EVS

'If more time were allocated to the preparation of EVS volunteers by the sending organisation before departure, the impact of EVS experience on both volunteers and on the host organisation could be bigger'

EVS organisation, Turkey, 2016

The impact of EVS on the sending organisations is perceived as being rather limited. The explanation lies in the **insufficient support for the sending organisation to be able to take up its full role in EVS, from preparing volunteers to establishing a long-term contact with them and offering follow-up support upon their return.** Interviews indicate that if more time and budgetary resources were allocated to the sending organisation, it would benefit not only the volunteer and the sending organisation, but also the host organisation.

Many project leaders expressed the view that the flexibility introduced under Erasmus+ in relation to the grant allocation between the sending organisation and the hosting organisation has led to a decrease in the share allocated to the former. Moreover, the negotiation over the budget allocation often affects the collaboration between the partner organisations. Therefore, unless co-financed from other funding sources, the sending organisations are incapable to fulfil their role as a 'fully sending organisation'. In practice, this translates into a decreased interest among organisations in taking up this role; for those that do assume this role, it often proves to be rather weak one, limited to placing volunteers abroad. This was one of the key recommendations also from the stakeholder seminar organised during this evaluation. The seminar highlighted the need to strengthen the support for sending organisations to reach out to young people, support them in the application process, prepare them for mobility and follow-up after EVS.

Difficult cooperation between partner organisations

Observations and reports of the EVS organisations consulted point to four factors that can hinder the collaboration between partner organisations in EVS projects: a) cultural and organisational differences; b) turnover of project leaders; c) unstable conditions in the country; and d) conflicts between the partner organisations over the allocation of the project grant.

A study conducted in 2007⁷⁶ found that 34% of surveyed organisations participating in EVS projects reported difficulties with partners due to cultural differences and language

⁷⁶ ECOTEC (2007), *Evaluation of the YOUTH programme*.

problems. A project leader in France explained that the difficulties they encounter with partners stem from having different perspectives on what EVS is for and the different quality standards they apply to their projects. To overcome this difficulty, the good practice promoted by the organisation is to build strategic partnerships in EVS to help their partners build capacity and develop quality in mobility projects.

'We sometimes work well with one person from the partner organisation, but there is a high turnover and many people leave the organisations'

EVS organisation, France, 2016

The same organisation reported that about 15% of planned EVS projects are cancelled because the project leaders leave the organisation and the new leaders do not continue the project, despite the signed partnership agreement. The hindering factor here is the long period of seven to eight months between submitting the project grant application and the moment when the EVS activity commences. While this is not a difficulty in itself, it is a factor that influences

EVS due to staff turnover.

In some cases, an unstable situation or changing circumstances in participating countries pose a challenge in the collaboration between partner organisations. For example, an EVS organisation in Poland reported that when visas were introduced for Polish people going to Georgia for a period of longer than 90 days, the organisation had to identify resources to cover the visa fees on its own. Such unexpected situations affect the budget of the project and may generate conflicts between partners.

This links to the fourth type of challenge in the cooperation between the partner organisations in EVS, namely conflicts over budget allocation. With the new rules under Erasmus+, the share of the monthly grant allocated to the sending organisation is up for negotiation between the coordinators of sending and hosting organisations. This process of negotiation may affect the collaboration between the partner organisations from the very start of the project, as reported by the organisations consulted in Italy, Poland, Portugal and Turkey.

Risks associated with volunteers dropping out

It can be more risky for small organisations to get involved in EVS given that if a volunteer drops out, there is no extra funding available to replace the volunteer. Some larger organisations apply for more places and then fill them as they go along. This relates to a wider issue of the funding not being very flexible once the organisation has submitted its application. This challenge has been reported in several countries where case studies were conducted. The role of the EVS coordinating organisation can help in some cases, but, in general, interviewees would welcome some flexibility being introduced to the EVS funding arrangement.

Change in the programme regulations

The changes accompanying the transition from the Youth in Action programme to the Erasmus+ programme regulations are a particular challenge identified by some project leaders in relation to recent projects. A project leader from Poland reported that confusion surrounding the documentation and financial rules applicable between 2014 and 2016 triggered some misunderstandings with partner organisations and affected the preparation and implementation of their EVS projects.

4.3 Local community impact

Key findings: the impact of EVS on the local community

1. Overall, the impact of EVS on the local community is perceived as **being less visible and less significant than the impact on individual volunteers and their host organisations**. Local community impact also seems to be **more difficult and less frequently assessed** than the other two types of impacts, partly due to the, often, informal nature of interactions between the community and volunteers, and partly due to the lack of tools to structure impact at local level.
2. However, there is clear anecdotal evidence of how **EVS can lead to a ripple effect**: volunteers can have a direct impact on the target groups (direct beneficiaries) and local volunteers they engage with, but also on other locals in the wider community. Many EVS projects and activities develop capacity of local communities and strengthen civil society.
3. In terms of the direct beneficiaries of the voluntary service, the work of EVS volunteers seems to be **particularly important for the hardest-to-reach target groups** (e.g. people at risk of social exclusion, Roma community, NEETs, people with disabilities or learning difficulties). EVS often enables them to experience new activities that would not be available were it not for the EVS volunteers. It can also enable them to learn languages and to become more open to other cultures. For some of them, many EVS volunteers become role models.
4. In relation to the impact on the wider community, the EVS can have a **positive impact on intercultural learning and dialogue** through the volunteers' interaction with local community members (e.g. cultural events). This again often increases the locals' interest in travelling abroad and the motivation of local young people to engage in transnational mobility actions.
5. Contact with incoming EVS volunteers often has a positive influence on local people's **attitudes towards the EU**, raising awareness about Europe and their **identity as Europeans**. Moreover, regular interaction with EVS volunteers can also help to **reduce prejudices** within local communities towards foreign nationals.

EVS projects seem to have a positive impact on the **awareness and level of interest in local communities about volunteering and the EVS** in particular. A greater understanding of the contribution of youth policy to young people's lives is also often detected.

EVS projects have also often shown to have an impact on local systems and structures by developing the **capacity of local communities** and, in doing so, helping build civil society. Through EVS collaboration of accredited organisations with a network of local partners, an area's capacity to provide opportunities to young people can be strengthened, as too can its civil society.

6. **To maximise the local community impact**, a) EVS projects should **facilitate support for direct interaction** between EVS volunteers and locals, b) EVS projects should be designed **to match the needs of the local community**, and c) the impact on this level should be **planned as an integrative part of the project**.

This section examines the impact of EVS on the communities where EVS volunteers are active. The focus is on the community that hosts the volunteer during their mobility,

although some findings also relate to the 'home' community to which the volunteer returns after EVS.

This section first provides an analysis of different types of the local community impacts, starting with impacts on direct beneficiaries and then looking at impacts on the wider community and local structures and systems. This is then followed by a summary of both the supporting and hindering elements to either facilitate or hamper the impact of EVS on local communities.

The section is based on the findings from literature, the stakeholder seminar, and the 15 case studies conducted. Thus, the views of EVS volunteers and alumni, staff of the host and sending organisations, members of EVS local communities, as well as participants from the stakeholder seminar have been taken into consideration.

4.3.1 Analysis of local community impacts

Direct beneficiaries

- Volunteers are well placed to support the **hardest-to-reach** members of society.
- Volunteers often enable provision of activities that would **otherwise not be available**.
- EVS can promote **language learning and openness** to new cultures among beneficiaries.
- EVS volunteers often serve as **role models** for beneficiaries.

Wider community

- EVS seems to promote the spread of knowledge about other countries and can foster **intercultural learning** that, over time, can lead to increased openness to **cultural diversity**.
- EVS volunteers often trigger an increased interest from the local community in **new languages and cultures**.
- Constant interaction with EVS volunteers can contribute to **breaking down stereotypes** towards foreigners and minority groups, and **fostering tolerance** of cultural differences.
- EVS projects can have an impact on local people's **attitudes towards the EU** by raising their awareness about Europe.
- EVS volunteers often make local community members **more aware of EVS** and of the benefits of volunteering, and can motivate **civic engagement** through the power of example.
- EVS volunteers seem to **motivate other young people** to go on EVS or other EU mobility actions.

Local systems

- EVS often contributes to the promotion and development **youth policy and practice**.
- EVS volunteers can bring **skills and knowledge** that builds capacity of the host community.
- EVS projects often contribute to **building the capacity** of the local community.
- EVS can enable **transfer of know-how and good practices** between EVS organisations to other local agencies.
- EVS often contributes to building the capacity of small, local organisations and can **strengthen civil society**.

Impact on direct beneficiaries

Volunteers are well placed to support the hardest-to-reach members of society.

This was strongly supported by the examples collected in the case studies that show how important the work of the EVS volunteers is for the hardest-to-reach target groups. The impact of seemingly ordinary, unremarkable activities organised by the volunteers can be immense, the effect of which can extend much further than envisaged. A case in point is a weekly handicraft workshop for Roma women in the Roma Community Centre of Faro, which was conceived, organised and run by an EVS volunteer in Portugal. The volunteer's activity created a time, space and a social meeting point for the Roma women who might otherwise have been isolated in their homes. Even when the EVS volunteer's stay had ended, the centre and the women continued the activity that the volunteer had started because they enjoyed it. The volunteer's work empowered the Roma people, which helped to ensure the survival of that important activity and the benefits derived from it.

"It was a very positive experience for the Roma women, who felt comfortable to be speaking to the EVS volunteer (also a woman) about their problems, because they knew that the volunteer will not judge them". **Representative of local community, Portugal, 2016**

A key finding is that beneficiaries often find it easier to establish contacts with the EVS volunteers and can feel closer to them than to other support workers acting in an official capacity, such as social workers. This is thanks to similarities in age and in the mode of communication that is informal, non-judgemental, and often non-verbal due to the language barrier of the EVS volunteers. When EVS volunteers bring their own experiences of disability or disadvantage, it seems that the

"If it were not for the EVS volunteers, we couldn't carry out the activities with local volunteers because they would simply not be sustainable. Volunteers from Baia Mare usually come for one month and then they stop because they do not want to do activities with Roma children. Roma children are aware of this reluctance and that is why they prefer the affection of the EVS volunteers, because they are kind to them and they do not abandon them after one month". **EVS local community member, RO, 2016**

similarity is even greater and so is the impact. The similarity can generate trust and facilitate bonding, leading to good relationships between the volunteers and the beneficiaries. A good example of this is in the Italian case study. The host organisation's target group - people with disabilities - had the benefit of working with EVS volunteers with some form of disability themselves. The staff of the organisation gave a concrete example of one autistic EVS volunteer who instinctively knew how to communicate with the residents in wheelchairs on the same level. EVS alumni at the same host organisation also believe that the target group felt more at ease with them because they had similar challenges in communicating and therefore found the interaction to be on an equal footing.

Similarly, in Lviv, Ukraine, the presence of EVS volunteers with disabilities had a positive impact on how the local community perceives people with disabilities. It was reported that usually, it is a surprise for local people to see that EVS volunteers with disabilities do certain things outside their homes, which is not common for disabled people from Lviv. Thanks to EVS volunteers with disabilities, representatives of the service sector in the local community are learning how to work with people with various impairments. As an example, there are now courses on how to support and work with people with disabilities, which have been inspired to a vast extent by EVS volunteers who took part in such training.

The attachment often built between the beneficiaries and the EVS volunteers can facilitate the learning and development of beneficiaries. Speaking about the impact that EVS volunteers had on the service users (persons with learning difficulties), a representative of a local charity in the UK emphasised how much the latter have grown in confidence, in social skills and in personal development overall: *'The volunteers support the service users' growth within the service'.*

The lesson offered by the examples covered in the case studies is that many EVS volunteers seem to bring a message of hope and empowerment to isolated or hard-to-reach groups, and can make them feel appreciated and as part of the wider society, which it seems that local volunteers or social workers cannot replace.

EVS volunteers often enable a provision of activities that would otherwise not be available.

The additional human resources that EVS volunteers bring to the host organisation often allow it to organise new activities that make it possible for beneficiaries to take part in new experiences. As a result, beneficiaries can gain from services that they would otherwise not be able to access at all, or would otherwise have to pay for, such as learning a foreign language (Edwards, 2001; Handy & Greespan, 2009).

For example, one volunteer who carried out his EVS in a village in Bosnia-Herzegovina organised games through which the children in that village experienced animation and non-formal learning, which was a different way of learning for them than what they had experienced in the school setting.

"In the absence of the EVS project the children would have probably never experienced non-formal learning and would have spent their spare time on the streets." EVS volunteer in BH, 2013-2014

"The guitar lessons helped children to discover music and to learn to play an instrument....which some pupils still pursue to the present day." EVS volunteer in DE, 2014-2015

"If it were not for their support, we would not have been able to organise the summer camp because most of the teachers were on holiday. The EVS volunteers organised the entire activity programme for the summer camp and offered many opportunities for children to learn and adapt to new situations". EVS local community member in RO, 2016

Similarly, in Germany EVS volunteers initiated their own activities in school projects, such as guitar lessons, sewing, singing and sports events. By introducing guitar lessons, one volunteer helped to extend the school curriculum to include more music lessons and even sparked a lasting interest in playing a musical instrument for some pupils.

For other beneficiaries, the simple fact of having access to activities dedicated to them is beneficial. For example, for the refugee children at the border between Turkey and Syria, the activities organised by EVS volunteers were beneficial as this was the only way for them to do something useful, as they could not go to school.

EVS often promotes language learning and openness to new cultures among beneficiaries.

Hosting organisations' beneficiaries who are in contact with EVS volunteers seem to become more open and tolerant towards people from other countries and cultures (Mieñkowska-Norkiene, 2011; also Jyrkkä, 2012). An EVS host organisation in the UK explained how their target groups benefited from the interactions with volunteers from other cultures. As many of them do not travel and have insular lifestyles, they are unlikely to come across people from other cultures. For them, the EVS provides an important opportunity to meet people from other countries and learn about their cultures. The staff interviewed believe that cultural barriers had been broken down as a result of beneficiaries' interactions with EVS volunteers from other countries. For example, beneficiaries became more open to the German culture after having conversations with German volunteers about their traditions and customs.

In many EVS projects, volunteers conduct specific activities to promote other languages and cultures among the target groups. For example, one volunteer found that the key benefit of her activities in Turkey was that children learned to speak French and discovered some aspects of the French culture.

An inherent feature of the EVS projects that can help to create the conditions for improving the openness to new cultures is the mutual learning aspect of the activities involving EVS volunteers with target groups. For example, while language barriers can be an obstacle, in some cases this proved to actually enable mutual learning between EVS

volunteers and target groups. For example, in Germany, EVS volunteers and school pupils learned German and English together through reading exercises. In Portugal, the language barrier between the EVS volunteers and the Roma people proved to be positive in building relations between both parties, by allowing the Roma people to feel more at ease and comfortable with the volunteers, and feel more empowered by being able to teach the volunteers words and phrases in Portuguese. Similarly, in the Netherlands, an ex-EVS volunteer reported how at one of the projects she was working on (the urban garden), one of the long-term unemployed beneficiaries in the project was learning English, so they helped each other learn English and Dutch.

EVS volunteers can serve as role models for beneficiaries through the activities they engage with them, and sometimes these positive experiences encourage more volunteering. EVS volunteers are an example of mobility for other youth, as they can bring awareness and motivation for participation in transnational youth projects in Europe (ECORYS, 2007). In the UK, one individual who was a former beneficiary was influenced by the EVS volunteers and later became a community volunteer. Seeing someone of a similar age, but with a different background, volunteer can be a source of motivation for beneficiaries to do the same thing, which is particularly important in rural areas with high numbers of inactive young people, who do not necessarily have the opportunity to volunteer locally or are not encouraged to do so.

The impact of volunteers acting as role models often extends beyond the target groups into the wider community. In Nagyvázsöny, Hungary, according to the

"It is much easier to encourage local young people to take part in the voluntary service with the help of the international volunteers, than through other local actions and activities. When they see that there is an international volunteer working with the seniors, they then think – 'why not me?' Sometimes we try to encourage local volunteers to assist international volunteers". EVS sending organisation in RS, 2017

feedback from the local people, the EVS volunteers are seen as bringing great added

"In 15 years we have never had any aggressive attitudes from young people. We believe this is due to the positive examples that youth see and reproduce".
Representative of local authority, Roubaix - FR, 2016

value to the city, as they serve as an example for many young people who have fewer opportunities. In a way, the volunteers often fulfil the role of 'ambassadors of the programme', as most of the local youth would not have otherwise learnt about EVS and its potential. Reportedly, many of the EVS volunteers have served as role models for the youth of Nagyvázsöny, who have become more motivated to go abroad through EVS in order to gain similar experiences. This has led to an increased number

of local youth willing to take part in such experience and apply for EVS projects.

Likewise, in Murcia, Spain, it was reported that several girls supported by the host organisation went to the Murcia voluntary service to learn about existing opportunities. For the moment, none of them have enrolled in EVS, but some girls have offered to help in the host organisation. The current EVS volunteer observed that some young people in the community are surprised that someone would leave their country to work abroad without receiving a salary, and they start reflecting on what a person can gain from going abroad and helping others.

Impact on wider community

EVS helps to promote the spread of knowledge about other countries in the local communities and can foster intercultural learning that, over time, can lead to increased openness to cultural diversity. By meeting and interacting with volunteers from different parts of Europe, members of the local community learn about different customs, traditions and languages, thus often becoming more open to and appreciative of cultural diversity. Cultural events in the community can facilitate this by bringing locals and foreign volunteers together, and by providing an opportunity for

intercultural learning and dialogue. For example, in Pordenone, Italy, through meeting two Serbian EVS volunteers several years ago, a local NGO representative was inspired to organise community events to integrate different cultures, and to also provide assistance to foreigners in the local area; this has proved successful, as shown by the steady flow of intercultural events now taking place in Pordenone. Nowadays, the events have a much wider scope and a broader range of participants, due to an increase in the number and variety of backgrounds of the EVS volunteers. EVS volunteers also participate in the development of these intercultural events. This increase in the number and type of intercultural events in the city has had a positive impact on the local community as it has enhanced its interaction with, and openness towards various cultures, as well as created a greater awareness of volunteering. The presence of EVS volunteers has created a much more vibrant atmosphere in Pordenone, a city which is otherwise lacking in cultural diversity.

"There is a lot of misinformation and subjective news about Turkey in Romanian media. We [Turkish volunteers] informed Romanians about the reality in our country and the life of Turkish people. In the end, my mentor came to Turkey and he changed his perspective on the country. EVS gave me the chance to explain what kind of life we are living in Turkey'." **Former EVS Turkish volunteer in RO, 2016**

By interacting with EVS volunteers, local communities can expand their horizons and learn to appreciate different perspectives on life. In Baia Mare, Romania, people in the local community learn from the EVS volunteers about the reality of life abroad, disconfirming the misinformation they receive from the media; some locals even became interested to discover more about other countries, and to travel to the home countries of the volunteers, such as Turkey. The locals are most curious about those countries that are most different to their own. This is confirmed by the study of Caki (2012), which found that intercultural dialogue between

EVS volunteers and Turkish locals led to overcoming preconceptions and improving understanding of one another's culture and values.

Given the geographical and social context of some communities such as that of Nagyvázsöny in Hungary, programmes like EVS can have an even bigger role to play in contributing to a more tolerant and culturally diverse society, as many of the locals had not met a person from abroad before EVS volunteers came to the town. It was reported that, during the past ten years, volunteers have become a part of everyday life in the local community. As a result, locals have become more open to new cultures and now accept volunteers as an integral part of the community life.

Intercultural learning can also take place through informal contact between the locals and EVS volunteers. In Turkey, a native Turkish person who shared the same accommodation with an EVS volunteer became motivated to improve his English language skills. Given the long duration of the mobility, the volunteer and the native spent much time speaking in English on a daily basis, which made it possible for the native to improve his English and even to certify his language skills.

"In the flat I was living in, my flatmate could not speak English but over time he became very motivated to learn English and now he is trying his best to learn it, and has decided to take the TOEFL test because his English has improved." **EVS volunteer in TK, 2015-2016**

EVS volunteers often trigger an increased interest from the local community in new languages and cultures. One of the ways in which this can manifest itself is in the increased interest of local people to travel abroad. In Poland, thanks to the interaction with EVS volunteers, respondents from the local community showed eagerness to know more about the life and families of the EVS volunteers and about their motivation to do voluntary service abroad.

In Finland, it was reported that as part of their work with local youth, EVS volunteers share information about cultures and traditions from their home countries. This way they trigger a desire among the community members to learn more about the life and cultural

values of other countries. In many cases this has inspired local youth to pursue EVS and other mobility programme – young people who would have never considered going abroad if it was not for this contact with EVS volunteers and the supported, safe structure of EVS. Likewise, in Kohila, Estonia, according to the interviewed representative from the local kindergarten, the main positive effect was that members of the local community also get the opportunity to learn other languages from the volunteers, as well as getting to know more about other cultures and countries. Additionally, the EVS volunteers have made members of the local community more open minded and encouraged the children to feel comfortable and open with people from different countries.

Constant interaction with EVS volunteers can contribute to breaking down stereotypes towards foreigners and minority groups, and foster tolerance of cultural differences.

There are concrete examples of how the presence of EVS volunteers in an area can reduce prejudices of local people towards particular groups of foreigners. For example, through one project that hosts EVS volunteers in Germany, the Circus Schatzinsel, their collaboration with foreign volunteers in various projects helped to reduce xenophobia and prejudice of locals towards refugees. A representative of a local community school project explained that through interaction with the EVS volunteers, the attitudes of pupils and parents alike had improved towards people coming from abroad. The positive image created by EVS volunteers was found to be the reason for this change.

"The EVS volunteers are well received ambassadors of their countries in the community [...] the EVS projects improve the image of foreigners in the local community and help decrease prejudice of German people towards foreigners".
Social worker at circus, DE, 2016

Such changes in attitudes among local people seem to happen as a result of the activities carried out by EVS volunteers, the time spent with them, and the relationships developed between EVS volunteers, target groups and others in the host community. In Poland, the work done by EVS volunteers at a kindergarten for children with intellectual disabilities, autism and complex disabilities helped improve locals' perceptions of foreigners. A mother whose child attends the kindergarten explained how international volunteers help reduce the level of xenophobia in the community as locals, who tend to be closed towards other cultures, see how EVS volunteers from other countries take care of their children at the kindergarten.

Likewise, in Italy the involvement of EVS volunteers in intercultural events in the host community has helped to reduce prejudice towards foreigners. The EVS host organisation also noticed a positive change in attitude within the local community, as well as within certain local organisations, towards people from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

"Our NGO consists of more than 2,000 members and volunteers who were taking part in different events and discussions. Thanks to this, we found out not only about volunteers' work in Ukraine, but also about the lives of blind people in Europe".
EVS host organization in UA, 2016

In some cases, EVS volunteers also help to break down stereotypes towards people in the local community itself. For example, from the perspective of a Turkish ex-volunteer who did EVS in Romania, the biggest change he observed as a result of his voluntary work is bringing together the local Romanian people and the Roma children, indicating a start in the cycle of breaking existing prejudices. Additionally, the view of local community members in Lviv, Ukraine, is that young people who come to volunteer in Ukraine within the EVS programme seem to be more open-minded than their counterparts from Ukraine. EVS volunteers are also

perceived as being more sensitive to people who have health problems. Moreover, in comparison to Ukrainian volunteers, they do not emphasise disability as the main feature defining a person with any impairment. As a result, it was observed that over time the stereotype of people with disabilities, such as blind people, **as being helpless** and

dependent, is slowly fading, and EVS volunteers make a great contribution to overcome this perception.

The EVS programme can also contribute to breaking down prejudices and improving relations between young people in countries whose relations have historically been tense. For example, in Turkey, the staff at an EVS organisation believe that EVS projects helped to foster mutual understanding among people from different countries, by receiving volunteers from two very different countries (Armenia and Greece), who had not previously been to Turkey. This experience helped the volunteers and the locals to overcome their prejudices and to understand each other beyond the tumultuous historical relations between their respective countries.

EVS projects can have an impact on local people's attitudes towards the EU, by raising awareness about Europe. In Poland for example, a parent interviewed revealed that, as a result of meeting several EVS volunteers, she joined the Schuman Parade for the first time. The parade is an annual demonstration of support for the idea of European integration and Poland's active role in the EU. A similar impact was also observed in Ukraine where, according to the representative of the local organisation for blind people, EVS contributed to building a positive attitude towards the EU and its volunteers in particular.

EVS volunteers often make local community members more aware of EVS and of the benefits of volunteering, and can encourage civic engagement through the power of example. Through the presence of EVS volunteers in the community and their interaction with locals, EVS projects often raise the level of interest in EVS and in volunteering among the local community. For example, in Italy, respondents from an organisation in charge of intercultural events reported an increase in local people's interest towards EVS and volunteering since the EVS volunteers began to be involved in local cultural events. They explained that more people are asking for information regarding the intercultural events organised in the city, but also about how they too could volunteer in the community to organise events or provide services to people.

In addition, by simply knowing more about the socio-cultural activities at local level and talking about it to others, EVS volunteers sometimes help to show local people how to value and appreciate the opportunities available at local level. Through their interaction with friends and locals, volunteers can help to disseminate information about opportunities available at local level for education, cultural life, youth activities and civic initiatives, among others. In Estonia, interviewed representatives from the local youth centre (host organisation) expressed how the presence of EVS volunteers has raised awareness about the youth centre and in turn has led to more young people visiting the centre. Some volunteers in Faro, Portugal, even created a radio programme where they had interviews with locals about different social issues and spread information about local cultural events in Faro. This dissemination is important in the context in which locals tend not to be aware of the richness of cultural and social events and activities existing in Faro, a city that otherwise lacks participation of the community in general.

EVS volunteers often motivate other young people to go on EVS or other EU mobility actions. They are an example of mobility for other young people in the host, as well as home community, that can inspire and motivate them to participate themselves in transnational mobility. For instance, the most visible impact of EVS on the local sending community in Roubaix, France, is the increase in the number of young people willing to take part in EU mobility, and in particular EVS. According to the representative of the local authority, this is the result of the efforts

"Spanish young people from university met the Italian EVS volunteers and then came to the association and wanted to know how they too could do volunteering abroad [...]. Some local people come to the activities organised by the NGO just because they like the EVS volunteers". Local NGO, PT, 2016

invested in making the information about EVS visible and accessible for all young people in the city.

Not only can the example of EVS volunteers stimulate the local youth's interest and motivation, but it can also enhance the motivation of international young people who meet them. In Portugal, the representative of a community NGO that hosted two EVS volunteers reported how the contact of Erasmus students with the EVS volunteers aroused the interest of the former to engage in volunteering abroad.

Raising awareness of the benefits of mobility for young people's development seems to be an important effect of the returning EVS volunteers who, through sharing their experience, often encourage others to participate in EVS. In some cases, former EVS participants confirmed that their example motivated others to go abroad through EVS. For example, in France, because of sharing her experience in EVS, the friend of the volunteer decided to do an EVS in Romania. Similarly, in Romania, an important impact on the local community is created by the Romanian volunteers who went abroad on EVS, and have now returned home. They become living examples of the EVS experience and often motivate other young people to go on EVS or to volunteer in the community. Many of the volunteers returning home continue to volunteer for Team for Youth (a sending, receiving and coordinating organisation in Romania), by helping to promote EVS face-to-face, by assisting with the implementation of EVS projects, or in the selection of new volunteers for EVS. They also offer their expertise to the Team for Youth staff whenever possible. Therefore, by inspiring others to go abroad through EVS, volunteers can also have an effect on their home community.

Impact on local systems

EVS can contribute to the promotion and development of local youth policy and practice.

"Youth policy is often only visible in the media, but with the presence of EVS volunteers, it is more visible and locals learn about local youth policy". **Local authority, Roubaix – FR, 2016**

The effect of the visible presence of the EVS volunteers in the community in some cases makes members of that community more aware of the situation of young people and of volunteers and can improve their understanding concerning what youth policy can offer young people. According to the results of a survey conducted in 2011 (European Commission, 2011), 78% of youth workers believe that, due to the EVS project, the local community has become more aware (28% 'definitely' and 50% 'to some extent') of the concerns and interests of young people.

This effect was reported in France, Portugal and Turkey. In Roubaix, France, thanks to the financial support and policy support available from local authorities, EVS was integrated in the local and regional youth policy as a concrete action to address the challenges of young people, in particular youth unemployment and social exclusion. Similarly, in the stakeholder seminar, an example was given of how EVS was integrated into the local youth policy in Lille, France, which makes it a big difference from the Erasmus mobility.

EVS volunteers can bring skills and knowledge that helps to build the capacity of the host community.

A notable example of this was reported in Portugal, where an EVS volunteer coming from the Roma community did his EVS at a Roma Community Centre. At his own initiative and with the help of the staff at the community centre, the volunteer organised a Roma Culture Week, which involved training courses and workshops for workers from the municipality, health care professionals, social workers and others. The training focused

"For the social workers to hear a Roma activist speaking about Roma rights and culture was a big awareness moment and learning curve, as they realised many things they hadn't known before [...] This is also due to the contextual situation in Portugal, where there are not many organisations with Roma activists advocating for Roma people's rights". **Roma Community Centre, PT, 2016**

on intercultural awareness of the problems and the situation of Roma people. The impact on the social workers was reportedly very high. Learning about Roma rights and culture directly from a Roma activist was a unique opportunity for the social workers to raise their awareness about the topic, which proved to be a steep learning curve for them as they were able to understand the realities of social exclusion faced by Roma people.

By bringing different actors from the community together, EVS projects often enable organisations to start to cooperate more frequently with other organisations and structures and with local policy-makers. This, in turn, seems to build a network at local level that strengthens the capacity of local level structure to provide more and better opportunities for young people. For example, ADICE in France uses EVS to collaborate with a broad network of local partners and to build their capacity for providing opportunities to young people in the city. This is considered as a way of multiplying the positive effects of EVS projects through a system built at local level. This impact is enabled by the support available from local, regional and national authorities in France, to ensure that EVS projects have an impact beyond the volunteer and the receiving organisations.

Another impact sometimes reported at system level is that EVS can enable a **transfer of know-how and good practices** between EVS organisations to other local agencies, including the local authorities, thus leading to building capacity at local level. For example, an EVS sending organisation that implemented an EVS project in Serbia started collaborating with the World Bank in a programme to improve opportunities for young people in that region.

"The work with the volunteers enabled us to give some advice to the city council on how to tackle the arrival and integration of young refugees foreign to Berlin and the German culture."
EVS host organisation, DE, 2016

In Germany, the experiences gained from the EVS projects helped to build capacity of the host organisation, IJGD, enabling it to transfer its knowledge to the local authorities on how to deal with incoming refugees during the peak in 2015. The increased organisational knowledge stemmed from hosting EVS volunteers who connected well with the refugees, because they could

engage in the exchange about mobility experiences and the difficulties encountered when trying to blend in with the German culture. The lessons learned from working with EVS volunteers made it possible for the IJGD to advise the local authorities on how to best accommodate the incoming refugees.

On a wider scale, the knowledge and good practices from EVS can be used to develop new international mobility programmes between partners further afield.

In France, the ADICE organisation are developing a voluntary service programme between France and the US, for which they are using the experience acquired from the EVS programme as an example for the scheme's mission and structure.

"We use EVS as an example to prevent radicalisation of young people and to help youth get out of the situation in which they are stuck, but also to elaborate the systems of organisations to promote youth opportunities. The French embassy in the US supports us to develop volunteer exchanges based on the experience of the EVS. If we can build this, it is because we can apply the results and lessons we learned through ten years of experimenting with EVS. We want to do the same with the EU Aid volunteers."
EVS host organisation, FR, 2016

EVS often contributes to building the capacity of small, local organisations and can strengthen civil society. Through the additional resources and support they bring to the host organisations, EVS volunteers often help to increase the capacity of small organisations to deliver services at local level. Once this effect is multiplied for many small NGOs in the same community, EVS can become a tool to sustain local non-profit organisations and increase the provision of youth work services, which in turn strengthens civil society. In Portugal, local NGOs increased the number and quality of activities they offered to local youth, thanks to the support received from hosting EVS volunteers. This occurred via the organisation in charge of coordinating EVS volunteers (ECOS), which worked with local partners' projects and simultaneously helped to build

the capacity of small organisations that could not afford to recruit staff, or did not have the resources to organise their own EVS project. Specifically, the ADS Association in Portugal is an example of how support of the EVS programme through the coordinating and host organisation, ECOS, helped to build their capacity so that they could eventually organise their own EVS projects. In 2012, ADS obtained, with the help of ECOS, accreditation for EVS and now runs its own EVS projects.

Local community story: Ukraine

According to the representative of the local organisation for blind people in Lviv, Ukraine, EVS has contributed to **building a positive attitude towards the European Union (EU)** and its volunteers in particular. Above all, EVS volunteers **inspire the Ukrainian youth to volunteer**. For instance, children from one school that hosted volunteers organised a charity concert. Therefore, the fact that volunteering is becoming more popular in Ukraine results, among other things, from international volunteering programmes such as EVS that promote this idea.

Another important benefit from EVS is the **new knowledge gained by beneficiaries** of the receiving organisation's activities, as well as by the wider community. For instance, as part of their responsibilities, EVS volunteers teach various courses such as English and other languages (also for blind people), computer science, and literature. They also share information about cultures and traditions from their home countries. This triggers a desire among community members to **learn more about the life and cultural values of other countries**, and makes them re-evaluate their perceptions of other countries. The interaction of people from different countries and cultures is broadening knowledge about people's lifestyle choices that are not as popular in their local context, such as different dietary habits to theirs. It was suggested by local community members that volunteers could even organise some cultural events, such as a day dedicated to a specific EU country, so that local people are able to learn something interesting about other countries.

From the view of local community members, young people who come to volunteer in Ukraine within the EVS programme also seem to be **more open-minded** than their counterparts from Ukraine. EVS volunteers are also perceived as rather **more sensitive** to people who have health problems, and in comparison, to Ukrainian volunteers, they do not emphasise disability as the main feature defining a person with any impairment.

Generally, it is **young people who benefit most** from interacting with EVS volunteers, especially groups of people who volunteers have been working with directly, e.g. children with disabilities. EVS volunteers teach them how to live with a disability without constant support, how to move around the city, and how to be more independent. They show parents that their children are able to do some things on their own and that they should not be afraid to give them more freedom. This is particularly important in the context of Ukraine, where there is still some discrimination against children with a disability, and they remain marginalised.⁷⁷ Experience with EVS volunteers shows that foreigners with disabilities are less afraid of going outside of their house. Examples of such an attitude can change society's and the disabled community's way of thinking about disabled people. EVS volunteers with disabilities serve as an example that *'having a disability is not the end of the world'*. It can be observed that over time the stereotype of people with disabilities, such as blind people, **as being helpless** and dependent, is slowly fading, and EVS

⁷⁷ https://www.unicef.org/ukraine/SitAn_NationalCons_Adv_EXTENDED.pdf

volunteers make a great contribution to overcoming this perception. Thanks to EVS volunteers with disabilities, representatives of the service sector, such as waitresses or city guides, can learn how to work with people with various impairments.

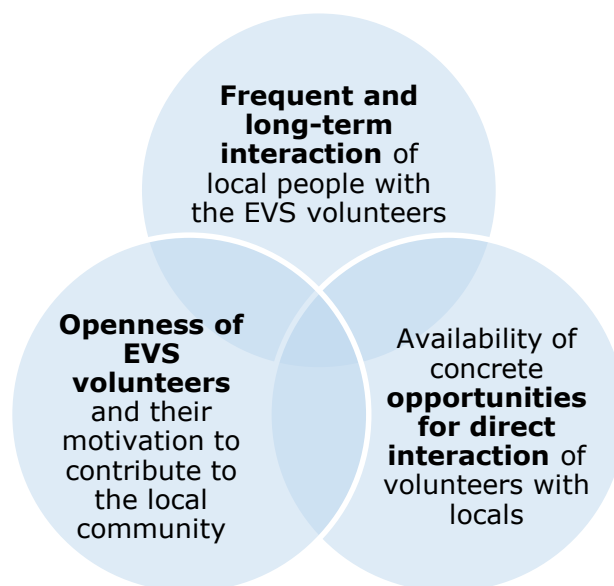
The only identified obstacle that is reducing impact on the local community is the **language barrier**. Yet, if volunteers come from neighbouring countries, such as Poland or Slovenia, there are almost no difficulties in communication. Besides, as it has been highlighted by interviewees, the willingness to understand each other '*helps to find ways to cope with every situation...One word in English, the second in Polish - that is how we understood each other*'. Another important external barrier for EVS success is the **turbulent political situation** in a receiving country such as Ukraine. According to members of organisations hosting EVS volunteers, they have not been hosting any volunteers for two years because young people are afraid to come to Ukraine. The city of Lviv, which is located close to the Polish border, is the farthest place they are willing to go. This factor particularly affects people with disabilities, as they are more vulnerable than others in situations of political unrest.

4.3.2 Support factors

This section examines the factors that support the impact of EVS on local communities. Overall, the impact of EVS seems to be highest on those members of the local community who are directly in contact with the volunteers, such as the beneficiaries of the host organisation's activities (target groups and service users), the local volunteers they work with, and the people they meet at, for example, language courses or community events. On the other hand, the impact appears to be low on members of the local community who do not directly interact with the EVS volunteers. The more intense and regular the interaction of the locals with the EVS volunteers, the stronger the impact can be. Therefore, the key factor in the impact of EVS on the local community is the opportunity of having sustained, direct interactions between volunteers and locals. Since the EVS volunteers are visible and available most often at community events organised outside of the host organisation, such events should be encouraged and promoted. Without opportunities for direct interactions, it seems that EVS volunteers tend to stick together while locals do not notice their presence or work in the community.

"EVS encourages forward thinking for all at local level and shows possibilities. Having European funding has set out Community Action from other local charities, and has helped to show what other charities can do if they are willing to get accredited in EVS." **EVS host organisation, UK, 2016**

The **key factors** that can maximise the impact of EVS on the local community are as follows.



These factors are discussed in turn below.

Frequent and long-term interaction between volunteers and locals

The long duration of the EVS placements is an important factor that can support the impact of EVS on the local community. This was highlighted by several community respondents, such as the parents at a kindergarten in Poland where volunteers were working with children. Their view is that a longer period of volunteering allowed the children to get used to the volunteers, whilst also allowing the volunteers to build deeper relationships with the children, something which otherwise might not have happened if the EVS mobility was shorter. This was a similar case in Romania, where the social worker at the Roma community centre observed a concrete difference in impact depending on how often and for how long one volunteer was visiting the Roma children.

"In the past we had one volunteer coming once a week. Now, the volunteers come twice a week. This is very important because the more often and the longer the volunteer stays in contact with the Roma children, the greater the impact is on the children".
Local community member in RO, 2016

Nevertheless, one of the National Agency representatives does not agree that long term EVS has a much bigger impact than shorter mobility – according to their findings, it seems that the length is not decisive, but the quality of and frequency of the EVS activity with the local people is.⁷⁸ There does indeed seem to be a visible difference in the level of impact of EVS on the local community depending on the intensity and regularity of the EVS activity. In Portugal, the representative of a Roma Community Centre reported how a current EVS volunteer started implementing a workshop with Roma women more regularly (once a week), while in the past the workshop was held once a month. The difference in the frequency of the activity produced visible changes on the beneficiaries, according to the respondent. The reason for this is that the more regular the activity is, the more contact the Roma people have with the volunteer and the more time they have to strengthen their connection.

However, not all EVS projects involve frequent and intense interactions with members of the local community. Some current and former volunteers revealed that they lacked opportunities to interact with the locals because their tasks mostly revolved around office

⁷⁸ This was expressed in the stakeholder seminar.

work for the host organisation. This means the impact that the presence and work of any EVS volunteer on the local community can depend on the specific EVS project and on the tasks that the volunteer is doing, whether or not they are connected or rooted in the community.

The lesson learned from the experiences reported is that EVS projects that are designed to involve a regular and intense interaction of EVS volunteers with local people (e.g. school pupils, Roma people or care residents), are more likely to enable a direct impact on members of the local community. Additionally, one of the main recommendations from the discussions from the stakeholder seminar is that EVS projects should be designed in a way to articulate the needs of the local community, and the impact on this level should be planned as an integrative part of the project. Therefore, in order for EVS to have a greater impact on local communities, EVS projects need to be designed to reflect the community needs and facilitate frequent involvement of local community members.

Openness of volunteers and their motivation to contribute to the local community

A reinforcing effect on the local community seems to be the importance of the openness and motivation of the volunteer to contribute with their skills, knowledge or background to the community. When the volunteers are open towards others in the community and are motivated to contribute, they often find ways or even initiate activities to make this possible. For example, in Faro, Portugal, one EVS volunteer from the first generation of EVS volunteers, hosted at the ECOS organisation, initiated a project – 'Video-Forum' – in

"They [the staff] always urged us to be proactive and pursue our own projects [in the schools] with activities through which we can ensure long-lasting learning for school pupils." EVS volunteer in DE, 2015-2016

order to involve the local community to participate in interactive video projections and to discuss about global issues with impact at local level. Each generation of volunteers at ECOS has continued this forum, and it is a concrete example of how EVS volunteers can, on their own, initiate activities with a direct impact on the wider community.

While some EVS volunteers use their own initiative and start a project in order to have an impact on the local community, others seem to need encouragement in this direction from their host organisation. Thus, it seems an important factor is the supportive attitude of the project leaders and youth workers towards enabling the volunteers' interaction with the local community. According to a former volunteer who did his EVS in Serbia, EVS volunteers should be encouraged to demonstrate motivation and take initiative in shaping their volunteering programme based on the knowledge and skills they can offer to the host organisation. In that sense, he suggested to give EVS volunteers an opportunity to talk about their experience, for example whether they had sufficient tasks. This could enable volunteers to evaluate their receiving organisation and even improve their operations. The interviewed curriculum coordinator from the Kohila Kindergarten in Estonia also suggested that if possible, volunteers should be encouraged to show more initiative, for example by doing some projects on their own. Nevertheless, it was recognised that this might require extra budget from EVS.

"At community events, volunteers have the chance to give something of themselves. In this way, their role is not limited only to helping with kids at kindergarten, but they can share all that they bring with them and their skills can be fully used." Parent at a kindergarten that hosts EVS volunteers, PT, 2016

Availability of concrete opportunities for direct interaction of volunteers with locals

Those people in the local community who take part in activities or events that involve EVS volunteers often reap greater benefits from the presence of the volunteers than those who are not directly involved. However, a purposeful interaction between volunteers and locals does not come by chance. Several members of local communities reported that *'international people tend to stick together'*, which was confirmed by some

"When invited to concrete intercultural activities, EVS volunteers attend and interact with local people and businesses and this creates a much more international and diverse city" **Representative of local NGO, IT, 2016**

of the interviewed EVS alumni who recommended that volunteers *'should mix more with the locals'*. It appears that what volunteers need are concrete opportunities to interact and exchange dialogue with locals in the wider community. One good practice in this regard are community events organised for local people to meet foreign volunteers. For example, in Norfolk, UK, the EVS host organisation set up an informal exchange group with the community to stimulate conversations between volunteers and locals, in

order to enable intercultural dialogue, and for the volunteers to improve their English language learning.

The lesson learned from these experiences is that impact on the local community can be maximised when there are concrete and structured opportunities for interaction and dialogue between EVS volunteers and members of the broader community. While good practices of intercultural activities involving EVS volunteers and locals exist, there is still much to do to make such events the rule instead of the exception of EVS projects. This idea was emphasised in interviews with project leaders, who called for diversifying the opportunities for interaction between the locals and EVS volunteers. They proposed organising, within EVS projects and in partnership with local providers, *'cultural courses'* that go beyond language courses, cultural trips and visits, intercultural and community events.

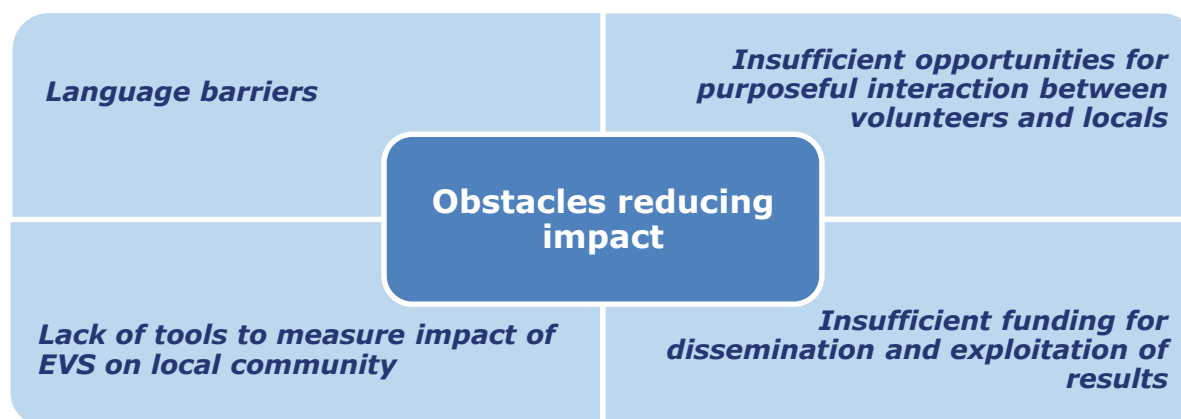
"The key factor that enables EVS to have an impact in Roubaix beyond the organisations participating in EVS is the political willingness of the local authorities to promote EVS as a way to promote the region and as a way to implement local youth policy". **EVS organisation, FR, 2016**

Looking at the broader picture, a long-lasting impact on the local community is not likely to occur unless the EVS project is designed with this objective in mind. The examples showcased in the studies conducted are illustrative in this sense. For example, in Roubaix, France, EVS was integrated as a tool of local youth policy in order to respond to the societal challenges of young people – for example, to reduce youth unemployment and fight discrimination by achieving positive results for young people through volunteering and mobility. A key factor identified in this case is the political willingness of the local authority to promote EVS as a way to realise the objectives of local youth policy, and as a way to promote the region. Similarly, a key factor which came out of the discussions in the stakeholder seminar was that EVS projects need to articulate the local youth policy, the other programmes for funding for youth, and the other voluntary and mobility programmes.

Therefore, the lessons learned from these examples is that EVS can produce a sustainable impact on the local community, but only if the EVS projects are designed, planned and implemented with this objective in mind, and in cooperation with partners at the local level, including the local authorities.

4.3.3 Obstacles reducing impact

Overall, the impact of EVS on the local community is perceived as being rather less significant and less visible than the impact on volunteers themselves and their host organisations. There are several factors explaining this. Firstly, where there is some impact, this often occurs at an informal level and is therefore difficult to assess. Secondly, this level of impact is not considered to be the main priority for EVS projects, since the programme does not provide the tools to achieve impact at local level. Therefore, facilitated opportunities for direct interaction between EVS volunteers and locals are encouraged to maximise local community impact, as is a greater awareness of obstacles that hamper this impact. These obstacles are explained below.



Language barriers

The language barriers are by far the most frequently mentioned factor that can hinder the interaction between the volunteers and local people. This factor was mentioned in interviews with stakeholders in all countries where case studies were conducted, and it was also a finding from the literature review (Nelan & Grineski, 2013). As most EVS volunteers do not speak the language of the host country, and the local people are not used to speaking English, this seems to constitute an obstacle in the communication between EVS volunteers and local community members. Nevertheless, while this is typically the largest barrier when starting the EVS, as the project progresses the challenge appears to soften and the barrier is gradually lifted. As a project leader in France explained: *'We had the pre-departure training yesterday, and the common fear of the volunteers is that they will not be able to communicate in English or in the local language. However, typically, at the end of their projects this is never an issue that is recalled or reported by ex-volunteers'*.

"The children do not know English at all and we could not understand each other at the beginning, which was a big challenge for me".
Former EVS volunteer in EE, 2016

From the perspective of a volunteer who is doing her EVS in Netherlands, the most important thing that should be improved in EVS is the language support. Currently, it is up to the organisation to facilitate language courses (or in some cases not to facilitate this). She therefore believes it should be compulsory to offer languages courses and that there should be face-to-face classes as well as the online ones, which are currently offered. This point was echoed by most interviewed stakeholders from the Spain study, who suggested that there should be face-to-face language courses in addition to the Online Linguistic Support, as this is believed to not be sufficient on its own.

Insufficient opportunities for purposeful interaction between volunteers and locals

However, even when the language barrier is gradually lifted, as the EVS volunteers learn to speak in the local language, often their interaction with the locals remains rather scarce. The reason for this seems to be that there are **not enough facilitated opportunities for volunteers to meet the locals**. Some of the interviewed project leaders pointed out the fact that the EVS programme has a strong focus on the EVS

"We do an evaluation meeting with EVS volunteers just after the completion of the EVS project, but we cannot assess the impact EVS has on them or the local community. We send them a questionnaire six months after, but very few volunteers respond to this. It would be good to get a formal follow-up at a certain period after EVS, formalised from the National Agency, and to ask them where they are and what they did for the local community upon return from EVS".
EVS organization, FR, 2016

volunteers, but there is no emphasis to achieve impact on the local level. As discussed in the stakeholder seminar, EVS projects should be designed to articulate the needs of the local community and the impact on this level should be planned as an integrative part of the project. It was recommended to have a better match between the needs of the community and the EVS project for the engagement of the EVS volunteers. The focus seems to be reduced further when it comes to the impact on the volunteer's home community where, due to a lack of follow-up and dissemination activities, the experience of EVS volunteers is typically shared only among friends and goes unnoticed by the wider community.

Lack of tools to measure impact of EVS on local community

Some of the project leaders interviewed believe that there might be more impact on local community than is currently known, but there are no tools available to assess it. In France, ADICE, an organisation that annually sends hundreds of volunteers abroad through EVS, has put in place a good practice of sending volunteers a questionnaire six months after they return from EVS, in order to assess the impact of the mobility experience on themselves and beyond. However, the response rates are low, the time is too short to assess the level of impact, and the tool is not structured to address the impact on the local community. The project leaders would thus welcome the introduction of a formal tool for follow-up and assessment of impact on the local community, a tool provided either by the National Agency or from the EU agency.

"Impact occurs at an informal level, but it is not the priority of EVS projects. Given the lack of support and follow-up from the sending organisations, many of the EVS volunteers go back home and are disappointed because during EVS their expectations change. There is a need for support to implement a project for follow-up on a long-term basis, and this needs to be thought about from the beginning as part of the project. It will help to give an impact and sense of local community, to go beyond the personal benefits."
EVS

Insufficient funding for dissemination and exploitation of results

Still, the widespread view among the interviewees is that enabling closer interaction between EVS volunteers and local community members would be mutually beneficial. The main challenge is that, while dissemination and promotion of such activities is important in this regard, the funding allocated to it is perceived as minimal and the guidance as insufficient. This was also expressed in the stakeholder seminar, where participants highlighted the need to have at least basic (key) information on EVS disseminated widely in the local community (for example through media and/or accredited organisations).

"Empowering ex-EVS volunteers is key to avoiding a big missed opportunity. The principle we follow is "I live the experience, I share the experience and I help others to get into EVS". There is a lot of money invested in EVS volunteers and it is a pity to end this support immediately after their return home. By talking to ex-EVS volunteers face-to-face, other youth can get motivated that they too can volunteer abroad".
EVS host organisation, RO, 2016

One project leader in France emphasised

"Projects are disseminated according to the time and resources of the organisation, but there is little consistency. Sometimes, volunteers run their own blog pages, which helps show partners their stories. However, often the organisations are left to use their own social media channels to promote, but there is no guidance about what they should be putting out."
Focus group of EVS organisations, UK, 2016

the challenge that the specific budget for dissemination and promotion activities for EVS, that used to be available under the Youth in Action programme, has been reduced under the Erasmus+ programme. On the other hand, she pointed out how beneficial the grant for organising dissemination activities in view of the 15th anniversary of EVS, which was made available in 2016, has been for attracting interest from the local community and raising awareness of the positive experiences of EVS volunteers who returned. Similar views were expressed by project leaders in other countries of the case studies, who pointed out the need for a specific budget line to promote the EVS programme and successful projects.

According to the interviewed member of the local community from the Youth Office in Obrenovac, Serbia, their main recommendation is to have more pro-active promotional activities in the community and a higher level of promotional activities among young people. This could be organised as a national campaign, but also as support provided to local actors and institutions who are mediators towards young people. Since financial support is also significant in that sense, there might be possibilities within the EVS programme to cover some promotional activities at national and local level.

The staff interviewed at Team for Youth in Romania also suggested creating a network of ex-EVS volunteers to help them share their experiences and learn from each other how to use their EVS experience in the future. In 2014, Team for Youth created a network of ex-EVS volunteers from Romania, where volunteers discuss how to promote EVS in their local communities and how to improve EVS experiences.

5 Conclusions and recommendations

Key findings regarding the profiles of EVS volunteers and organisations

The EVS volunteers tend to be well-educated, civic-minded individuals who are motivated to develop as well as to make a change in the communities or the wider society. Evidence suggests that not all young people have the same access to EVS and some face obstacles to the participation. These obstacles mainly concern the lack of awareness, family influence, lack of support with the application process and regulatory and financial barriers. Most importantly, the obstacles to participation are experienced proportionally more (in terms of depth and breadth) by the more vulnerable young people – those from less privileged backgrounds, those with less experience in formal and non-formal education and youth services and those not affiliated with local youth clubs and other NGOs.

A large proportion of EVS participating organisations participate on a recurrent basis, with (extensive) prior experience of cooperation in the transnational partnerships. This may restrict access for new, first-time applicant organisations.

Key findings regarding individual impact

Most of the current EVS volunteers and alumni regard EVS as being very beneficial for their **personal development**, as it provides them with the opportunity to learn more about their abilities, develop their skills and competences and broaden their horizons. EVS also has a strong impact on developing volunteers' autonomy and independence. In general, volunteering - and more specifically EVS - seem to attract people with highly developed mindsets. This high starting level limits the potential of change effected through the EVS stay abroad. Nevertheless, most EVS volunteers subjectively perceive a positive impact on their personality development due to EVS, even if such positive change was not proved by the psychometric analysis.

EVS also has an **impact on the volunteers' learning and competence development**. Firstly, 86% of the EVS volunteers state that they improved their language skills, both in the local language and in English during EVS. While most volunteers start learning the local language from zero, they usually become fluent by the end of their EVS. Equally strong is the impact on improving English language skills. In addition, EVS improves the inter-personal and social competences, in particular with respect to the social and human skills such as interpersonal communication or understanding of other cultures, whereas the volunteering has less of an effect on their technical skills.

EVS helps to develop the **social capital** of its participants. Practically all alumni have friends who live abroad and whom they often interacted with during the volunteering period. EVS also influences the private life. At the time of the survey, two out of three EVS volunteers had a life partner of a different nationality than their own.

EVS improves the employability and career prospects of volunteers. 83% of the EVS volunteers and alumni feel that EVS helped them to identify opportunities for their professional future, clarify what they want to do later in life, and prepare them for an international career path. Amongst those returning from their EVS stay abroad, more than half also expect to have better job opportunities because of their EVS experience. This does not seem unrealistic as nine out of ten EVS organisations state that EVS has a high or very high impact on the employability of volunteers. Indeed, six out of ten EVS volunteers returning home, and more than every second alumnus/-a, think that the EVS experience helped to find their first job, and two out of three believe that it was profitable for their career development. Moreover, four out of ten EVS alumni are holding managerial positions. Beyond employment and career as such, EVS is also fostering an

entrepreneurial spirit, as nearly one in ten alumni already started their own company or organisation.

EVS has an effect on the participation of volunteers in the civic and political life.

It shows them the possible ways and forms of such participation and makes them better prepared for active participation. However, only one in four volunteers and alumni report to actively participate in the civic and political life at present.

An important part of EVS is the idea to strengthen the European identity and attitudes. In fact, EVS volunteers already have a strong relationship to Europe and this remains stable over time for most alumni. Additionally, **after EVS two thirds of EVS volunteers are more interested in European topics** and four out of ten feel more European. Participation in EVS also often leads to increasing volunteers' knowledge about, and interest in, other countries and cultures, as well as in different perspectives and ways of thinking. EVS volunteers tend to become more open to other cultures and often overcome cultural differences, 97% state after their EVS experience that they learn to get along with people with a different cultural background.

EVS promotes international orientation and **increases the participants' prospects of living and working abroad or working in an international environment.** More than half of the EVS alumni confirmed that their jobs have international characteristics, e.g. involving foreign staff members, international clients or international business contacts. EVS also makes people more mobile. Half of the EVS alumni have already changed their living/working country at least once, or even more than once for every one in five alumni. EVS stimulates the volunteers' interest in travelling and discovering new places and cultures.

Finally, the **EVS has a substantial impact on the attitudes towards disadvantaged groups and social challenges.** Through EVS, volunteers gain a better understanding of the problems faced by certain groups of people in society, and feel that they became more committed to help them, as 81% of the EVS volunteers say that they feel more aware of and committed to the inclusion issues related to people with fewer opportunities, and in general to work against discrimination. However, only a quarter of the alumni states later to be indeed actively involved in further community work.

Key findings regarding organisational impact

EVS brings clear benefits for participating organisations; **97% of surveyed organisations considered their participation as "successful"**. In terms of impact on organisational development, the representatives in particular value the positive impacts on "openness to cultural diversity" among staff (72%) and "improved project management competences" (62%). Surveyed EVS organisations value the impact of EVS on the international character of their organisation, with nearly all (96%) being of the opinion that the EVS programme has strengthened their international profile. Seven out of ten organisations (74%) plan on staying involved in the EVS.

The benefits that EVS brings to the participating organisations are wide-ranging, although they tend to be less visible and less tangible than the impact on individual volunteers. Typically, however, the impact of EVS on the participating organisations is perceived to be lower than their actual potential. The main issue appears to be the sub-optimal quality of some EVS projects, explained by three factors. Firstly, the quality of **EVS projects is not monitored in a systematic manner.** Secondly, **host organisations tend to lack capacity** to ensure consistently high quality EVS activities. And finally, the **sending organisations lack resources to provide a high-quality pre-departure preparation** and follow-up upon return. Coordinating organisations and National Agencies are already playing a role in addressing these weaknesses, but their role could be further strengthened and better resourced.

EVS volunteers and project leaders have different but complementing views about the organisational level impact. Current and former volunteers feel that EVS participation has a direct, positive impact on youth workers and other project leaders involved in EVS projects, usually in terms of skills development and intercultural learning. While these impacts are also mentioned by the representatives of **EVS organisations**, the latter focus mostly on the **organisational gains, including the capacity building and internationalisation**, which again help the organisation to increase the offer and outreach of its activities and develop their quality. By taking part in EVS, organisations also gain new international contacts and partners with which they eventually organise more international exchange projects. Thanks to building a strong international profile in EVS, the participating organisations gain visibility and a good image in the local community, which have the potential to attract more participants to activities, more local volunteers and more local partners, including improved cooperation with local authorities.

Volunteers are modest when assessing their impact on the host organisation, as they tend to find it difficult to define. Many think that they have not had much impact on staff or the organisation, and instead believe that they have learned more from the organisation than the organisation has learned from them. There are several reasons for this perception. First, volunteers consider that their influence is not high because the organisation had already received many volunteers before them. Secondly, some EVS volunteers carry out their main tasks and activities outside the host organisation – see chapter 4.2 -, hence the impact on the organisation is not as high as on those groups or structures (e.g. schools) with whom they are frequently in contact.

The **impact of EVS on small, grassroots organisations** is more visible than on large associations. This is because in relative terms, the small NGOs benefit the most from the extra resources brought in by the EVS volunteers. However, small organisations also face an increased workload and higher risks in cases of volunteer dropout. The role of the coordinating organisations is crucial in this regard, as they can help small organisations to host volunteers, which can then reap the benefits from EVS without the hassle of managing the administrative process.

Key findings regarding impact on local community

Overall, the impact of EVS on the local communities is perceived as being less visible and less significant than the impact on individual volunteers and their host organisations. Local community impact also seems to be more difficult and less frequently assessed than the other two types of impacts, partly due to the, often, informal nature of interactions between the community and volunteers, and partly due to the **lack of tools to structure impact at local level**.

However, EVS does lead to a ripple effect in the local communities. Volunteers have a direct impact on the target groups and on local volunteers with whom they engage with in EVS activities, but also on other locals in the wider community. **EVS projects and activities develop the capacity of local communities and strengthen civil society**. The impact of EVS is highest on those members of local community directly in contact with the volunteers; the more intense and regular the interaction is, the stronger the impact.

In terms of the direct recipients of the voluntary service locally, **the work of EVS volunteers is particularly important for the hardest-to-reach target groups** (e.g. Roma community, people with disabilities or learning difficulties). EVS enables them to experience new activities that would not be available otherwise. It also enables them to learn new languages and to become more open to other cultures. For them, many EVS volunteers become role models.

In relation to the impact on the wider community, the EVS has a **positive impact on intercultural learning and dialogue** through the volunteers' interaction with local community members (e.g. cultural events). This again often increases the locals' interest in travelling abroad and the motivation of local young people to engage in transnational mobility actions.

Contact with incoming EVS volunteers has a positive influence on local people's attitudes towards the EU, raising awareness about Europe and their identity as Europeans. Moreover, regular interaction with EVS volunteers can also help to reduce prejudices within local communities towards foreign nationals.

EVS projects also have a **positive impact on the awareness and level of interest in local communities about volunteering and the EVS in particular**. Greater understanding of the contribution of youth policy to young people's lives is also often detected.

EVS projects have also been shown to have an impact on local systems and structures by **developing the capacity of local communities** and, in doing so, they help to build further the civil society. Through EVS collaboration of accredited organisations with a network of local partners, an area's capacity to provide opportunities to young people is strengthened.

The key factor supporting or hindering the impact of EVS on the local community is the opportunity for sustained, direct interactions between volunteers and locals. Since the EVS volunteers are most visible and available at community events organised outside the host organisation, such events should be encouraged and promoted. Without opportunities for direct interactions, EVS volunteers tend to stick together while locals tend not to notice their presence or work in the community.

Suggestions for improvements based on the key findings

The study findings suggest that some improvements could strengthen the impact of EVS.

EVS could be improved for the **volunteers** by:

- Raising awareness of the EVS benefits, especially among **more vulnerable young people** through appointment of **EVS ambassadors (i.e. EVS alumni)** tasked with spreading awareness about EVS through word of mouth, social media and talks at schools, universities, youth centres and careers fairs;
- Empowering and **training frontline youth workers** and those working in formal services, such as the public employment services, to raise awareness of opportunities and increase young people's confidence to take up international mobility opportunities such as EVS – **financial incentives for youth workers to support young people with fewer opportunities** have also proven effective;
- Create new and use existing **peer-to-peer networks** and other structures to raise awareness-- for example, the creation of an EVS alumni network at EU level (similarly to the Erasmus Student Network) and advertising EVS through the Euro-Peers network launched by NAs in Austria and Germany;
- Advertising EVS as a supported mobility programme by **investing more in the training of EVS mentors and pre- and post-mobility training for volunteers**;
- Introducing **quotas for the involvement of young people with fewer opportunities** – in other words, specifying that a certain proportion of the volunteers sent and received should fall into the category of 'young people with fewer opportunities';

- Using **'youth-friendly' tools and channels for raising awareness**, such as social media, TV and radio channels favoured by young people (i.e. MTV), testimonials on YouTube, EVS stories on Euronews, EVS ambassadors among celebrities, etc.; and
- Preparing jargon-free guides/information materials on EVS, featuring testimonials from EVS alumni.

EVS could be improved for **organisations** by:

- **Reinforcing the role of the sending organisations** in selecting and 'matching' volunteers is important, with a particular focus on reaching out to young people with fewer opportunities, motivating them for mobility, and accompanying them with adequate support throughout the experience (before, during and after the EVS);
- **Reconsidering the EVS accreditation process** as organisations with many years of experience in preparing EVS project applications have an upper hand, given the expertise acquired and their available administrative resources. At the same time, active volunteers have the potential to make a big organisational impact in small, less organised organisations, meaning that it is important to ensure a wider pool of EVS organisations;
- **Strengthening the quality systems in EVS** is necessary by raising the capacity of host organisations to offer a quality EVS experience to all volunteers, which would be beneficial both for the volunteers as well as for the hosting staff and the organisation overall. **Monitoring** the implementation of the projects on the ground in terms of the support provided to the volunteers and the conditions ensured could prove valuable in levelling the standard of EVS projects across the board;
- **Improving the capacity and resources of EVS host organisations** to ensure consistently high-quality EVS activities, and to provide high-quality pre-departure preparation and follow-up upon return of EVS volunteers. This could include the training of mentors, training on maximising the impact on the local community, and training on supporting volunteers with specific needs. Coordinating organisations and National Agencies are already playing a role in addressing these weaknesses, but their role could be further strengthened and better resourced;
- For EVS sending organisations, concrete proposals for their improvement include **training on how to reach specific target groups and how to prepare them for mobility**. Some project leaders believe that for smaller or new applicant organisations, it would be beneficial to have targeted training on issues such budget management, reporting, monitoring and volunteer management.
- Supporting **follow-up processes after EVS is vital** for ensuring the re-integration of the volunteer in the 'home' community. A proper follow-up support of the returned volunteer could direct the individual to appropriate services in the home community, such as career guidance. It could also support the volunteer to share his/her experience with others in the community and, in this way, to extend the positive impact also on the home community.

EVS could be improved for **local communities** by:

- EVS projects should **facilitate direct interaction between EVS volunteers and locals**;
- EVS projects should be designed to match the **needs of the local community**,
- This level of impact would need to become a more **recognised** and formal priority for EVS projects and the impact on this level should be planned as an integrative part of the project.

Annex 1 – 15 case study reports

Due to the size, the case studies are provided as a separate document.

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