

RAY LEARN – ORGANISATIONAL EFFECTS OF HOSTING ESC VOLUNTEERS

Volunteering projects are strong organisational learning sites. Volunteers contribute capacity, ideas, visibility and connections, although organisations do not always retain the knowledge or initiatives that volunteers bring. Repeated hosting improves hosting-related organisational skills (mentoring, monitoring, communication) which are sometimes transferred beyond the Solidarity Corps volunteering environment. At the same time, hosting is organisationally quite demanding and finding suitable accommodation can be a challenge.

WHAT WORKS WELL

1. Volunteers bring new ideas and ways of working

Volunteers introduce project ideas, methods and perspectives that are new to the host organisation. They may have specific skills or experiences that influence existing activities.

2. Volunteers strengthen outreach and visibility

ESC volunteers often attract interest from local communities, especially from local young people. Their presence makes their host organisation and its European youth work visible and engages potential participants.

3. Volunteers increase organisational capacity

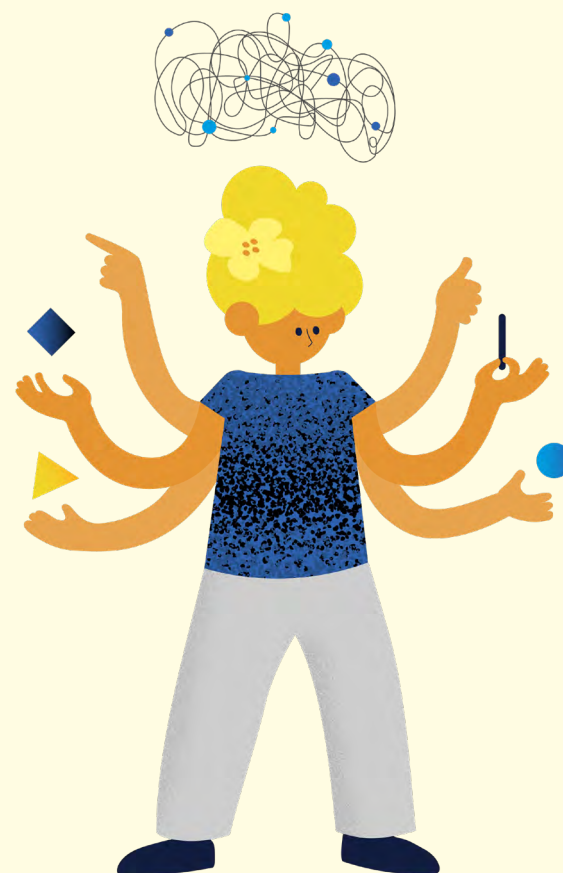
Volunteers contribute to daily activities and can help organisations maintain or expand their work. Specifically, they support outreach, activities with young people and the preparation of international projects.

4. Repeated hosting supports gradual organisational learning

Hosting volunteers repeatedly supports organisational learning through providing continuity and repetition. Project management, monitoring and quality assurance processes, and other methods are gradually improved by repeating them over time. Additionally, hosting requires organisations to explain how they work, clarify responsibilities and communicate expectations, which can lead to better planning and clearer procedures.

5. Learning can transfer beyond ESC projects

Procedures developed for ESC hosting are sometimes reused with local volunteers or in other activities.



WHERE MORE SUPPORT IS NEEDED

1. Volunteer contributions are not always retained

Organisations often improve their hosting systems, but they do not always have procedures for retaining the ideas, skills and initiatives brought by volunteers.

2. Supporting volunteer wellbeing carries significant responsibility

Organisations are responsible for supporting volunteers through personal difficulties, mental health problems or other complex needs. This work can be demanding and sometimes requires expertise or staff capacity that host organisations do not have.

3. Affording suitable accommodation is a challenge

Finding suitable accommodation is a major constraint for some organisations. It can determine how many volunteers an organisation is able to host, regardless of its interest or experience. Programme support does not always remove this practical limit

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ABOUT RAY-LEARN

RAY-LEARN focuses on strategic organisational learning and development in the context of the European Youth Programmes. The project looked specifically at the Erasmus+ accreditation, since it is the main programme instrument designed to support longer-term planning, continuity and strategic use of KA1 mobility activities.

Other key finding documents of RAY LEARN:

- RAY LEARN key findings and recommendations
- Outcomes of the accreditation in Erasmus+
- Organisational effects of youth worker mobilities
- Types of beneficiary organisations in Erasmus+ and the ESC

Refer to the main RAY LEARN research report for methods and further information.

“ WE REMEMBER A SLOVAK VOLUNTEER WITH AN ARTISTIC BACKGROUND: DURING THAT PERIOD, THE ASSOCIATION SHIFTED TOWARDS NON-FORMAL EDUCATION THROUGH ART, CREATING PERFORMANCES AND USING ART THERAPY WITH THE YOUTH [...]. THAT EXPERIENCE LEFT A MARK, ENRICHING OUR METHODOLOGICAL TOOLKIT. ”

– Focus group participant

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