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2012

EVS in Glerárkirkja, Akureyri



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Glerárkirkja, Akureyri

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Evrópa
unga fólksins

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Gleráirkirkja and EVS

It all started back in 2005 with an application from the youth work department of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, Gleráirkirkja. It was an application for a European Voluntary Service (EVS) project. The project was called “Together in Snow and Sun.” Since then, 13 volunteers have spent from 6 to 13 months in Akureyri as European Volunteers, participating in Gleráirkirkja’s projects.



112 months of volunteering – 16.800 hrs!

Silvia, Martin, Christina, Eva, Marta, Stefanie, Susanne, Katharina, Jule, Cornelia, Yvonne, Maike and Klaudia: You changed words on a paper into a living project. Thanks so much! Through your work and remarks you also made us think about this project. So we thought it was about time to reflect on our EVS projects, especially since young people did not participate much in the project description at the beginning.

EVS is a part of the Youth in Action (YiA) programme. The YiA aims to respond at European level to the needs of young people from adolescence to adulthood. It is an important contribution to the acquisition of competences through non-formal learning as well as the promotion of young people’s active participation in society. In order to offer projects for young people that qualify to be European, meeting the needs of young people and giving them competences by using methods from the non-formal learning area, **the active participation of the young person is essential from the very beginning.** By having evaluation meetings with adults’ experts, political decision makers from different NGO’s and young people, we hoped to bring our project some steps closer to be of such quality.

EU has long acknowledged the importance of volunteering. According to a recent study (Volunteering in the EU, final report¹) 22-23% of Europeans aged over 15 years are engaged in voluntary work. The study also shows that the level of volunteering between Member States is very different. Further, it shows the lack of clear and consistent policy on volunteering at a national level. Therefore, it is the task of every stakeholder of volunteering to engage in reflection and policymaking. The decision to make year 2011 as the European Year of Volunteering should have empowered us all to engage in this work. By hosting an evaluation meeting, Gleráirkirkja hoped to take a small step in that direction.

During the evaluation meeting, we wanted to listen, reflect, write and describe. Moreover, we hoped for a result: A new EVS project(s) would be born, involving Gleráirkirkja as a hosting/coordinating organisation or within a new structure even, if necessary. By twinning expertise and experience, we hoped that a new project would be born. The representatives from the different sending organisations brought in a very valuable expertise. Their valuable inputs, professional remarks and participation helped a lot. Thanks Alzbeta, Katharina, Silva and Ralf. In this document, you can read the results.

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/pdf/doc1018_en.pdf

Together in Snow and Sun

Since the beginning of EVS in Glerárkirkja we have based our work more or less on the same project description. Our last accreditation was in 2009. Upon request from the NA we updated our text in early 2010 as follows:

The tasks of the volunteer are threefold: Kindergarten (9 hours each week), Youth work (25 hours each week) and Training, reflection and presentation (10% or up to 4 hours a week). In the Kindergarten, the volunteer, at the side of the kindergarten workers, use creative methods to aid the young child in seeing more positive sites of life in its own rural area as well as in other countries. The intensiveness of those projects will increase during the project time, according to gained language skills of the volunteers. The volunteer will also participate in the youth work of the parish as well as in some weekend actions and be responsible for some leisure programme and open-youth-work programme. The volunteers will attend Icelandic language courses and attend a reflection session on the projects they are working on once a week. Detailed:

- **Kindergarten - up to 25% or 9 hours a week (was up to 45%)**
On two mornings in the week each volunteer is situated in one Kindergarten (cooperative partners in the project, "Children in Focus" / "Barnið í brennidepli"), At the side of the kindergarten workers, the volunteers will use creative methods to point out more positive sides of life in the kindergarten child's own rural area as well as in other countries. Those methods can be dance, painting, pantomime, singing as well as other methods that fit to the age group of children age 2 to 6. The intensiveness of those projects will increase during the nine months of the project time, according to gained language skills of the volunteers.
- **Youth work - up to 65% or 25 hours a week (was only up to 45%)**
On four afternoons and one evening in the week, the volunteers participate in the youth work of the parish as well as some weekend actions. The volunteers can be actively involved in the youth work of the parish and act as group leaders at the side of the deacon of the parish and / or other youth workers. The volunteers bring their own ideas of creative methods into the youth work and learn new ways as well. Further, the volunteers will have the possibility to lead their own groups.
- **Training, reflection and presentation - up to 10% or 4 hours a week (same as from beginning)**
The volunteers are provided with an Icelandic language course, approximately twice weekly in 90 minute sessions. They will also attend a reflection session on the projects they are working on once a week. The volunteers write open diaries (like www.blogg.is/evs) on the internet and assist the staff of the church to present the program and the work done. For example, this can be through making photos for publications or by doing some presentation for a possible target group. Volunteers will attend an on-arrival training, organised by one of the bigger hosting organisation in Iceland, as well as nationally organised mid term evaluation events. Further, every effort will be made to help the volunteer integrate into the local community, providing them with any training necessary to carry out their tasks..

Tasks and time schedule might change due to individual needs/skills of the volunteer.

The volunteers

Altogether 13 young people have participated in Glerárkirkja's EVS hosting projects. Their photos are on display in the parish centre and state the duration of their project.



13 EVS volunteers: Silvia (02-07/06), Martin (02-07/06), Christina (08/06-08/07), Eva (02-07/07), Stefanie (09/07-06/08), Marta (09/07-06/08), Susanne (09/08-06/09), Katharina (09/08-06/09), Cornelia (09/09-02/10), Jule (09/09-06/10), Yvonne (02-08/10), Klaudia (09/10-06/11) and Maike (09/10-06/11). Responsible for the EVS project in Glerárkirkja is the deacon, Pétur Björgvin Thorsteinsson.



European Voluntary Service

The European Voluntary Service (EVS) provides young Europeans with the unique opportunity to express their personal commitment through unpaid, fulltime voluntary activities in a foreign country within or outside the EU. In this way, it seeks to develop solidarity, mutual understanding and tolerance among young people, thus contributing to reinforcing social cohesion in the European Union and to promote young people's active citizenship.

A successful EVS project requires close co-operation among at least three key players: **a sending organisation, a host organisation and the volunteer**. One of the organisations involved in this partnership also plays the role of **coordinating organisation** and applies for an EU grant on behalf of the partnership. Organisations perform a number of roles: they identify volunteering opportunities and develop projects that benefit the local community. They also recruit and prepare the volunteers, host them and ensure follow-up.

EVS spans a wide range of areas, such as culture, youth, sports, social care, cultural heritage, the arts, the environment, etc. All the activities should have a clear European and intercultural learning dimension. EVS is a part of the European Commission YOUTH programme. Each participating country has established a **National Agency (NA)**. The primary role of the NA is to promote and implement the Programme at national level. Further information about the Icelandic NA is available on its website (www.euf.is).

The EVS has certain core values and quality standards. These are stated in the EVS Charter (available on the homepage of each NA). In order to protect and uphold these, organisations interested in sending or hosting EVS volunteers or coordinating an EVS project need first to be accredited. To receive accreditation, organisations submit an 'expression of interest'. Upon approval of their application, they sign up to the EVS Charter. Accreditation is valid for three years.

EVS is a true 'learning service'. All young people, aged 18 to 30, are eligible for participation. Beyond benefiting the local communities, by participating in voluntary activities, young volunteers can develop new skills and, therefore, improve their personal, educational and professional development. Volunteers can benefit from specific training throughout the activity and agree on their expected learning outcomes, processes and methods in advance. The Youthpass formally recognises their learning experience. Participation is free for the volunteers (except for a possible contribution at a maximum of 10% of the travel costs). They also get free board and lodging, insurance and an allowance for the duration of the project.



The evaluation

Glerárkirkja is a small hosting, sending and coordinating organisation in Akureyri, Iceland. It has hosted 13 volunteers over a six year period. The decision was made to use the seventh year to consider how to increase the quality of the hosting project(s). Being aware of some of the limits and some of the opportunities within the organisation, the governing team felt the need to know more. Considering their leading position as an EVS organisation within the rural area of Akureyri and neighbourhood, they wanted to focus on the development of one or even more new hosting projects. This should be done without a current project influencing further decisions, so they skipped hosting volunteers for this (seventh) winter.

At the same time, attention should be paid to the knowledge of the sending organisations involved so far in sending volunteers to Glerárkirkja. Further, the experience and the reflection of former volunteers should play a major role in designing one or more new projects. So, Glerárkirkja invited all the sending organisations that had sent volunteers in the past six years to Glerárkirkja to join an evaluation meeting with one or two members of each organisation. Further, all 13 former volunteers were invited to participate together with key people from Glerárkirkja and cooperating partners. The evaluation meeting took place on four full working days in Akureyri and Vestmannsvatn from 18th to 21st February 2012 (day of arrival was the 17th and day of departure was the 23rd).

Ten out of thirteen volunteers accepted the invitation. Unfortunately, three of the X-EVS could not attend, due to other responsibilities, but they all sent their greetings to the meeting and participated through email and YouTube in the evaluation process. One youth worker could not attend for health reasons. Surprisingly, only three out of seven sending organisations managed to send their representatives to the meeting. One of the seven is not active anymore as a SO, one could not send a representative due to structural changes within the organisation, but five planned to send. The main reason for the two that did not participate, was that a new date for the meeting had to be set. This was necessary as this project was accepted by the NA, but the funding had to be postponed for a couple of months. All together 20 people participated in the evaluation meetings:

- 10 volunteers
- 4 representatives from 3 SO
- Six people from Glerárkirkja (some could not stay the whole time).

In addition, an open, public meeting was held. Seven people from the “public” attended this meeting. Also, some evaluation meetings were held in the three different Kindergartens participating in Glerárkirkja’s EVS projects and introductory meetings in the Town Hall, at the School Department and at the Leisure Activities Department of Akureyri.

The meeting was funded through the YOUTH programme, Action 4.3. and with additional funds from the Evangelical Lutheran Church, Glerárkirkja, Akureyri, i.e. the host.

The programme of the meeting

Snow or Sun – boring or fun, turned out to be an important step in the development of Glerárkirkja’s EVS projects. We expected an active participation from all participants and they stood fully up to our expectations. We not only expected the representatives of the various sending organisations to give reflective responses to Glerárkirkja’s project, but that they also would introduce their projects and the way they work. We had expected too little, they not only met these expectations, but also turned out to be great co-facilitators of the whole programme, bringing in new ideas and creative ways of working.

The meeting was full four working days. Day of arrival was February 17th 2012. First working day was Saturday, February 18th. Day of departure was Wednesday, February 22nd.

As previously explained, the subject of this evaluation meeting was the evaluation of the EVS projects in Glerárkirkja in the period from 2006 to 2011. All participants had in common that they used to be volunteers in Glerárkirkja or that they work for a sending organisation that was involved in Glerárkirkjas volunteer projects. The volunteers had expressed the need to reflect more on their projects. This project also meet the needs of all promoters, as they had been working on updating their sending, coordinating or hosting procedures on a regular basis. Based on their remarks, we now know that the work done during this time turned out to be helpful for them as well.

Through various working methods, the project design aimed at giving space to different voices at different time. Within “Snow and Sun – boring or fun” each voice must be heard. In order to make that possible, the reflection took place in small groups, in pairs and in the big group by various methods.



On Saturday morning (day 1), we started the programme in Akureyri’s outdoor swimming pool. All the volunteers had been there during their EVS-time, but they still did not know each other. It was time to come closer, learn names and share.

Detailed programme

Friday, February 17th

Arrival in Keflavik.

Bus to Reykjavík. Flight to Akureyri.

Saturday, February 18th

10:00 A fresh start in the Hot Pots at

„Sundlaug Akureyrar" -

Participants meet participants

12:00 Lunch in Linda Steikhús.

13:00 Introduction

- Who are we
- What is the plan for the coming days?
- What is our connection to EVS (in general and also EVS Glerárkirkja)
- What do we expect from this meeting
- What could be our own input to make the meetings
 - effective, productive, fun, nice, something to learn from ...

15:00 Coffee time

15:30 EVS in Glerárkirkja through the years

- Volunteers are asked to introduce what they did during their EVS in Glerárkirkja (or what they still remember)
- If or how this contributed to their own learning and growing as a person / or professionals.
- Are they still sorry about something?
- Happy?
- What was helpful?
- What was not helpful?

15:40 Martin / /15:50 Christina // 16:00 Eva // 16:10 Marta // 16:20 Katharina //16:30 Cornelia (via Youtube) //16:40 Jule //16:50 Yvonne //17:00 Klaudia //17:10 Maike // 17:20 Greetings from Stefanie and Silvia

17:30 Summary

18:00 Dinner and informal time

Sunday, February 19th

11:00 Free morning, but everyone is invited to participate in the Morning Service in Glerárkirkja

12:00 Lunch in Glerárkirkja together with board members of the parish.

13:30 Introduction of the report from Saturday.

- Comments and remarks

14:00 Role and profile from sending organisations

- Open meeting
- The representatives from the different sending organisations are asked to introduce their work as sending organisations:
 - How do they select volunteers?



- How do they support them?
- What do they need from hosting organisations
- What should the project description include?

14:10 Evangelisches Jugendwerk, Reutlingen, Germany

14:30 YMCA, Praag, Czech Republic

14:50 Akzente, Salzburg, Austria

15:10 Referat Promocji i Integracji Europejskiej, Pawlowice, Poland

15:30 AWO, Erfurt, Germany

15:40 Evangelisches Jugendwerk, Münsingen, Germany

15:50 Melange, Wien, Austria

16:00 Mentoring and the YOUTHPASS process.

- Is mentoring helpful?
- What does help and what is too much?
- How does the new YP contribute to learning that is more effective?
- What should be the contact between the mentor and the sending organisation?

18:00 Dinner and informal time

Monday, February 20th

08:00 Visits to the Kindergarten Sunnuból, Síðusel and Krógaból.

- 08:45 Evaluation meeting in Sunnuból (Pétur)
- 09:30 Evaluation meeting in Síðusel (Pétur)
- 09:30 Evaluation meeting in Krógaból (Arna)

10:00 Akureyri, a hometown for a volunteers during their EVS.

- What opportunities does the place have?
- What challenges are there for being a volunteer in Akureyri?
- We will visit different places in Akureyri and together we try to make suggestions for what to write about Akureyri to inform the volunteer about his/her home to be.

10:15 Visit the head office of Akureyri school department.

11:00 Visit to Rósenborg

11:45 Visit to the City Hall

12:30 Visit to Hof, the Cultural and Conference Center of Akureyri

13:30 Lunch in Linda Steikhús

14:00 Introduction of the report from Sunday. Comments and remarks

14:30 A walk through Akureyri in small groups

16:30 Departure from Akureyri with a short picnic-stop

18:30 Myvatn Nature Baths

22:00 Arrival at Vestmannaavatn





Tuesday, February 21st

09:00 Breakfast

09:45 Introduction of the report from Monday.

- Comments and remarks

10:15 Advices for a good hosting project:

- Together we will try to draw a picture of the
 - What
 - How
 - Who
 - When
 - Why ... of a good hosting project.

12:00 Lunch

13:00 How can Glerárkirkja become a good / better hosting organisation?

15:30 Coffee ...

16:00 Final evaluation: Looking back on this meeting: How was it?

17:00 Preparation for the international evening

19:00 International evening

Note to participants: We are in the middle of nowhere, so

please buy everything you need before we depart from Akureyri.

Wednesday, February 22nd

09:00 Breakfast (we also have clean the house)

09:30 Introduction of the report from Tuesday. Comments and remarks

11:00 Departure

12:30 Lunch and farewell in Glerárkirkja

13:00 The end

Step by step

The group kept a diary in order to keep track of the different contents of the meeting and help the group to focus on the evaluation. Each day, two or three participants wrote down the important things and thoughts. The following pages contain the essence of the diaries.

Piece of Art

A poster made by all volunteers on the first day shows that all volunteers and sending organisations connect to each other in many ways. Many connections are to Pétur, Glerárkirkja, Iceland, EVS and the different kindergartens. Almost half of the volunteers became EVS volunteers in Glerárkirkja because they knew former volunteers of Glerárkirkja. Personal relationships to Pétur's family or his friends or the wish to go to Iceland, were other reasons for volunteers to connect to EVS in Glerárkirkja.



The way we would like to work!

At the beginning of the meeting, all participants were invited to reflect upon how wanted to work during the evaluation project. The question addressed how the meeting could become more effective, fun, nice and productive. Here are some answers:

- Define goals and keep them in mind
- Be open for others
- Be honest, use constructive critique
- Share experiences/ideas (to learn something)
- Always speak English
- Make jokes/tell stories to make things more memorable
- Have fun
- Co-volunteers should work together (helps to remember)
- Cooperation, work together as a group, support
- Be on time, start and end together
- Include everyone, respect each other
- Ask questions / active listening / active participation
- Stay focused but also relaxed
- Reflect on things, full engagement

First evaluation – what we remember

At the beginning, every volunteer was asked to share what he/she still remembered from their own projects and to give some comments, even evaluation on the different parts of the project.

Sunnuból

+	-
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - taking responsibility for special tasks - possibility to get to know every group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no tasks, nothing to do - staff talked in English yet expected the volunteer to understand everything spoken in Icelandic - difficulties with working with kids

Krógaból

+	-
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - intensive playing with the kids - focus on kids with special needs - children teach language - input - feedback from the kindergarten - contact to staff members (community) - enjoying the little tasks - best thing of the project - feeling of being needed, good cooperation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - first volunteer: didn't really know what to do - sometimes too many staff members, nothing to do

Síðusel

+	-
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - children teach language/ patience - get to know the system of kindergarten (input for work in Germany) - community of staff members - Austrian day in international week / newspaper - learn a lot, being in contact with teachers And kids 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - information for the parents

Kirkjuskólinn

+	-
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - more children after Christmas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no kids in the beginning - sometimes just Jóhannes → hard to plan the meetings

Glerbrot

+	-
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- cool activities- learn: to be patient and confident with youngsters → experiences for youth work- puppet project- activities, games, etc. → great support from the church	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- no real connection to the kids- Icelandic leaders: difficulties with language → language barrier- hard for a foreigner to integrate in the group (feeling of being excluded)- preparation was difficult, sometimes didn't go very well- no constant number of participants → difficult to plan- difficult to motivate more teenagers to come- two groups which were difficult to bring together

TTT

+	-
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- fun- more kids later- talk, having fun- maybe it should just be “save place” for the children (no content can be a good thing)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- no real concepts- sometimes not well prepared- first difficult- difficult to put more content in it

Barnakór/Æskulýðskór

+	-
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- participating was fun, good to learn songs- good connection to the kids, kids teaching stuff- fun to go on a weekend to Vestmannsvatn	

HÆNA

+	-
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- groups from all over northern Iceland- good to prepare food and decoration- met a lot of people- great fun	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- first time (HA) just very few participants

KNS

+	-
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- not many people- difficulties at preparation

Mömmumorgnar

+	-
- fun - learn a lot about kids → nice chat in icelandic	

Fjölvitamín - young people from other countries

+	-
	- not many people from foreign countries → more ideas/ intercultural events, actions against racism etc.

Group for German Kids

+	-
- kids learn German, contact with other German speaking kids	

Farskólinn

+	-
☺	

Camps

+	-
- new games, learning how to make activities - great experience: variety of activities - people speaking Icelandic - everyday 24h-experience - cooking	

Fermingar

+	-
- new ideas for youth work in Poland - trips → different stuff - contact with many different kids	- difficult to get in touch with them, keep the contact - no structure - not useful, hard to get in contact - they were not interested in talking → better: involved in the lessons, not only before

Undrun

+	-
- new ideas for youth work in Poland	

Landsmót AESKTH

+	-
- nice experience to meet people from all over Iceland	

Projects in Schools

+	-
- after reflection: they needed a person to talk to: Hope that they will find it important	- Oddeyrarskoli: hard to work with the children, difficult to find out what they needed

Youth exchange (We're Human, Right?)

+	-
- share of experience with others - get in touch with <i>Youth in Action</i> -programme - learn about organisation/games/leading etc.	

Yes, we can → project with students from Germany

+	-
- very inspiring	

Hjálparstarf kirkjunnar

+	-
- giving food to people before Christmas	

EVS-Camps

+	-
- On-arrival-camp: helpful to get to know volunteers/Iceland/language - get to know other parts of Iceland - sharing experiences → orientation ☺ ☺ ☺	- lots of repetition at mid-term

Language course

+	-
- good to know other young people in Akureyri - lot of learning - first course was helpful ☺ ☺ ☺	- not enough → wrong level, no grammar, not many important things to learn there (1 st course) - too much grammar, no talking

Contact with volunteers

+	-
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - same situation/ experiences → talk about problems, give advice to each others - very helpful - good times together - live together with volunteers: feedback, not being alone - making trips together - getting to know people in Iceland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - not very close contact to others (maybe not many EVS volunteers at that time in Iceland)

Other activities

+	-
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -gospel choir: good to be part of a group, concerts, learning of language 😊 😊 - work in Akureyrarkirkja 	

What was helpful?

- Pétur and family
- Anita, other volunteers
- social networks
- German speaking club
- living together
- choir
- living with a guest family or with other volunteers

What was the most important experience? / What did you learn?

- finding your place / role
- work together in group/team
- language barriers
- feeling of being a foreigner
- growing of personality
- stress-test for relationships
- organizing groups and trips
- get to know another country/culture etc.
- how to manage life on your own
- communication in a foreign language
- living alone



Open meeting

In order to involve more people in the evaluation process and at the same time to give others the opportunity to learn more about the YOUTH programme, one part of the meeting was open for the public. Eight people attended this meeting as well as all 20 participants of the evaluation meeting. After a short explanation of EVS, the role of the different organisations within EVS and the



YOUTH programme in general, representatives from each organisation introduced the main work of each organisation:

- EJR Reutlingen: Ralf DÖRR → www.ejr.de
- Akzente Salzburg: Silvia LEITNER and Katharina GIMM → www.akzente.net
- YMCA Prague Czech Republic: Alžběta ČECHRÁKOVÁ → www.ymca.cz
- AWO Erfurt: Martin PLEISS (volunteer)
- EJW Münsingen: Christina WIEST (volunteer)
- Referat Promocji Integracji Europejskiej Pawlowice: Klaudia MIGDAL (volunteer)
- Stowarzyszenie OiT-Zacynamy Poland: Marta ZACHRAJ (volunteer)
- Grenzenlos-Melange Wien: Katharina Zwerger (volunteer)

After this introduction, everyone was invited to participate in a discussion. The main topics were:

- Information between all the participating organisations should be clear
- What the SO and the HO can do for the volunteer in preparing for the EVS (accommodation, circumstances, work place, rights as a volunteer)
- HO should be aware of the skills of the volunteer and not prefer established SO
- National agencies should have more similar rules for EVS

Mentoring and the Youthpass

It was decided to have these topics already as a point of discussion this early in the process to initiate the discussion about the learning process and the support available within the EVS programme,. Three suggestive questions were raised:

- Is mentoring helpful? And what is too much?
- How does the new YP contribute to learning that is more effective?
- What should be the contact between the mentor and the SO?

Outcomes:

Mentoring

- Mentor should have finished a Mentor course
- Mentor should be professional
- Mentor should be an independent person
- Mentor should introduce the work area and show possibilities of this place
- Mentor must not be a friend of the volunteer but a friendly person
- Lack of sympathy between volunteer and mentor is for some volunteers a reason to change the mentor
- Mentor is supposed to solve problems with the hosting organisation or about the EVS, maybe in cooperation with the sending organisation

Youth pass:

- YP is an European document for validating your work as an volunteer
- YP is only for the volunteers, who can decide how they will use it
- YP is a right and no obligation
- YP exits of the process of setting the goals of the volunteer, the tasks of the project and the key competences
- YP is certificated by the European Commission
- Might be helpful for the volunteer in the future

Contact between mentor and SO:

- Mentor should have contact with the SO to solve problems of the volunteer or his project
- The Sending Organisation should inform the volunteer about the circumstances of the EVS

The local support and surroundings (Monday, 20.02.2012)

The aim of this day was not only to evaluate the EVS project so far but also to involve/inform the local authorities and local organisations about EVS with the purpose to support the project and the volunteers in the future.

Evaluation meeting in the kindergartens Sunnuból, Síðusel, Krógaból

The points discussed at the meetings in these three kindergartens were mainly the evaluation of the experiences of the volunteers and the host organisations. Different points were mentioned, such as the benefits for the volunteers, the staff of the kindergartens and of course the children. It was a very enriching learning experience for all partners involved (intercultural learning, language, gaining self-confidence, comparing experiences and methods).

It was also an opportunity to reflect how the staff and the volunteers themselves could improve the project. One outcome was also that it is important to define the role of the volunteer but still give him or her independence to implement own projects and ideas.

In all of the kindergartens, it was agreed that they want to continue the programme and host EVS volunteers in the future.

Meeting with head office of school department

It was discussed if and how the school department can take bigger part of the EVS project. The head of the department stated that they would like the programme to be more structured and more official so they could use EVS more effectively and offer more support to the volunteers. The head of school department expressed that he would like more kindergartens, or even schools, to participate in this project. He is open to further discussions to improve the project.

Rósenborg

It was discussed that Rósenborg could be a bigger part of the volunteer's life. The volunteers should be informed in the beginning of their EVS that they can attend workshops there, use the facilities for own projects and meetings and meet other young people (as many volunteers wished to meet more Icelandic people of their own age). The centre can support the volunteers to be more included in the local community.

It was also discussed whether staff members could take on the role of mentors for the volunteers, because they are older and more experienced and connected to young people and events.



City Hall

At the City Hall it was discussed what they do and could do to support the volunteers at their arrival. One part is administrative support at the arrival but another part effects the leisure time of the volunteers. An expressed wish was if the town could offer, for example, free entrance for the swimming pool or for the skiing area. They could also do networking to reach the foreigners who are struggling with the same problems as the volunteers in terms of social inclusion.

Hof (Cultural and Conference Center of Akureyri)

It was discussed what Akureyri can offer as a hometown (festivals, concerts, exhibitions, restaurants). It was mentioned what steps of actions could taken in order to introduce the volunteer to the possibilities of Akureyri to make the most of it (volunteering in connection with the cultural center itself to participate more in the cultural life that might be essential for the well-being of the volunteer).

Evening programme

Our trips in the afternoon and evening (Goðafoss, Mývatn Nature Bath, northern lights) showed a little part of what Iceland has to offer.

In the evening, the group made a quick stop at another organisation (Lífsmótun, Laugar) that also hosts EVS volunteers. Different to our project, they have intensive language courses before the program starts which seems to be good.



More reflected evaluation

(Tuesday, 21.02.2012)

For the purpose of more reflected evaluation an outsider did the facilitation on this day. Ari Páll Pálsson is a specialist within Atvinnuþróunarfélag Pingeyinga. His job was mainly to facilitate the discussion in order to provide a neutral and broad exchange and to let every voice be heard. At the same time, Pétur Björgvin, who had been leading the programme so far as well as being the main responsible person for EVS in Glerárkirkja, stepped back and took as a passive role as possible for him without leaving the room. Also, representatives from other organisations held their voices back so that especially former volunteers could express their ideas. The following is from the diary written by the participants:

Kindergarten: Ideas for a new project

- Regular structure – 4 days a week (no long breaks, whole days there); finish after lunch – not shorter
- Change of (age) groups should be possible – at the middle of the stay – chance to visit each group
- Informing the parents about the volunteer – Info-sheet at the beginning of the volunteers stay
- One of the staff should be responsible – regular meetings with volunteer – at least once a month: evaluating, discussing the tasks, which group, information flow between staff and volunteer, planned activities in the kindergarten
- Involving the parents
- Having a mentor within the staff – should be informed about EVS (informal learning, etc.) – regular meetings (1 large planning meeting in the beginning – role of volunteer, etc. – during first 3-4 month compulsory, afterwards as needed)
- Intensive language course in the beginning; involve the kindergarten
- Have the kindergarten part flexible – only for one-year-stays



- Larger evaluation with the project coordinator (and one of the staff members of the kindergarten) to discuss points such as time split between the different project parts (kindergarten, youth groups,...)
- How much should changes be possible? Should it be possible to skip one part (e.g. Kindergarten) altogether? Orm only partly – reducing time...?

Youth work at Glerarkirkja

- General problem is dependency on whether young people are coming or not... – alternatives are more needed than for the kindergarten
- Cooperation with schools, one contact person needed so that youth groups and school leisure activities are not at the same time
- Visit afternoon meetings at schools to get in contact with young people, to know about the planned activities there and to announce activities at Glerárkirkja
- Networking in general: Volunteer needs information on everything that is going on in Akureyri (e.g. Rósenborg – theatre group, schools,...), plan youth group activities when knowing what else is going on to avoid collisions
- Suggestions for activities of the volunteer in Glerárkirkja's youth groups: language course, movie nights
- Volunteers should have the opportunity to bring own ideas in – also if it is not 'successful' in the end (in terms of having more young people coming) – it is part of the learning process in any case
- Christian background, Christian contents..., Task of volunteer is to bring in the intercultural dimension. How much is the volunteer supposed to involve with Christian contents in his/her youth group work? Glerarkirkja's youth groups have a certain target group – important, to keep an offer for them and not to fuse them with other offers (at school, at Rosenborg,...)
- Glerbrot: volunteers are group leaders, up to them what to do there, other groups – other group leaders – volunteers help and assist, which (age) group is the right for volunteer to try something out, is knowledge on youth work needed...?
- Confirmation Group: providing tea and cookies, does it make sense? What are the goals? Some volunteers found it frustrating. Some found it was an opportunity to improve language skills and to announce activities of Glerbrot
- Volunteer is not only a helper but a colleague – should be communicated
- One contact person for the volunteer, role of a mentor, should know EVS, communication in English – at least in the beginning



Schools

- Volunteer could be something like a mentor for foreign kids (German, Polish, etc.)
 - Do leisure activities rather than to meet at school
 - Volunteer needs emergency numbers – severe problems can not be solved by volunteer!
 - Volunteers could hold info-workshops at high schools about EVS, organizing together with one teacher of the school;
- Contact persons at schools need to be provided (by school department)
 - Language courses could be provided by the volunteer in his/her mother tongue

Others

- Rósenborg: Information meeting in the beginning; talk about opportunities, develop plans, suggestion: short project (short movies), theatre project,...
- Hof: Information meeting in the beginning, working with Hof should be connected to the main theme of the project: youth and children
- Should there be a 'Volunteers manual' for youth work...? Can be helpful, can be limiting, can be intimidating.

Glerárkirkja as a hosting organisation – a SWOT analyzes

The former volunteers were asked to work under the facilitation of Ari Páll on a SWOT analyzes, focusing on Glerárkirkja as a hosting (coordinating) organisation. Here are the results:

Strengths

- Tolerance, openness, good atmosphere in the organisation
- many different groups/activities
- Pétur as strong and very motivated leader
- Flexibility, variety
- Two volunteers at the same time
- Experience
- Availability of facilities, sufficient funds (money is no general barrier for every idea) and materials
- Many facilities at disposal – rooms, material, etc...
- Centrally located in the town
- Staff and community is helpful, taking part of Arna in the evaluation meeting is great

- Different fields of activities in the project – not only youth work and not only at Glerárkirkja
- Good reputation: Glerárkirkja is very well established/known/visible organisation in Akureyri – young people come, no matter what activities are initiated by the volunteer

Weaknesses

- The project relies too much on one person (Pétur)/only one person is interested
- No project manual for the organisation of the project
- Long school breaks/breaks of youth groups before Christmas and in summer
- Missing support from some pastors
- Confirmation lessons are not very appealing to youngsters
- Role of church in society is often not helping to get in touch with youngsters
- Church and prejudice about it
- Every volunteer has to create something new – start from the beginning, there is no structure to build on/no continuity

Opportunities

- Glerárkirkja has a good location in Akureyri/the North of Iceland/Iceland
- Language – many people speak English
- Glerarkirkja is very well established/known/visible organisation in Akureyri – people come to church for events (Christmas, confirmation preparation,...) could be used even to bind people to the church – make them connect it to a positive experience; cooperation with more organisations or other churches
- Size of Akureyri: big enough but not too big
- Every volunteer can create something new / start from the beginning
- Icelanders have good English skills
- Cooperation with other organisations/churches
- Language as a door to Icelanders
- Making church events more appealing

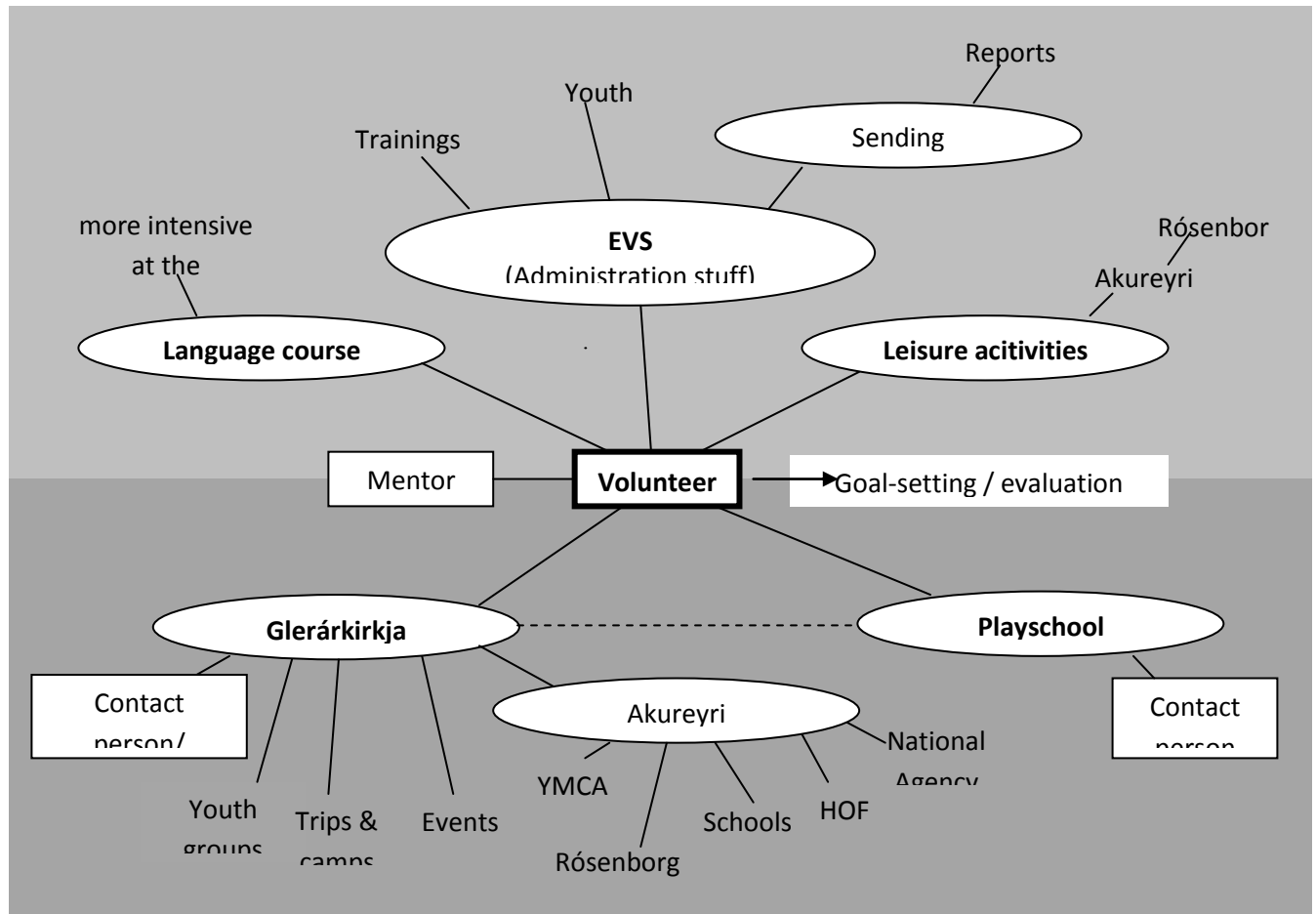
Threats

- Akureyri: darkness, cold,...
- Mentality of the Icelanders (often not open to foreigners etc.)
- Variety of other options for youth (they have already a tight schedule)
- What the volunteer does is not necessary
- Language barrier

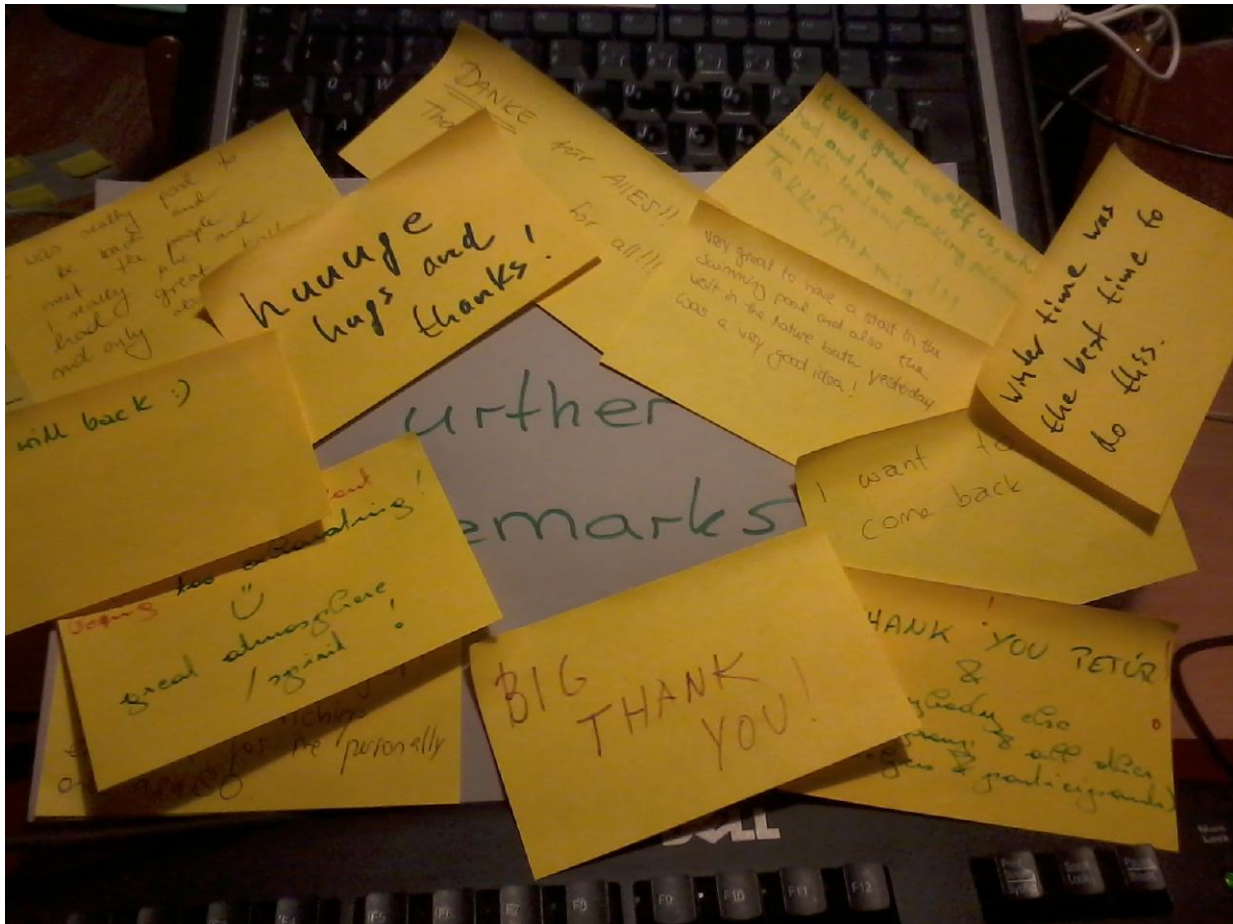


A vision for a new project – what should be a part of it?

At the end of the day all volunteers were to list what they thought about a new project and especially to focus on what should be a part of the new project. A lively discussion took place and the conclusion is expressed in the following picture:



Summary: Glerárkirkja should keep up the good work and become again a hosting (coordinating) organisation. As there is not a broad variety of projects within Glerárkirkja itself, emphasis should be put on developing a project in cooperation with other organisations and institutions in Akureyri, Kindergarten could be one such cooperating partner, but it should be kept in mind that in some cases volunteers might not be interested in kindergarten linked projects. Schools with older pupils could also be feasible partners, but projects linked with Rósenborg and cultural activities in Akureyri might be beneficial. Language courses at the beginning of the project need to be more intensive as well as all other training for the volunteers. Support has to be restructured so that it is not too much connected to one person only and mentor should preferably be linked to youth work with the same age group as the volunteers (Youth workers in Rósenborg for instance).



Final Evaluation

At the end of the project, on the day of departure, all participants came together for a final evaluation. As if they had not been evaluated enough, they were now asked to evaluate the evaluation meeting. This was done by a quiet discussion. We had different questions on tables in the big room. All participants were asked to go to each table and write their remarks on the questions. Here are the results:

FURTHER REMARKS

- “It was really good to be back and meet the people I really like. We had great talks, not only about EVS.”
- “Huuuge hugs and thanks.”
- “Danke für ALLES!!! Thank you for all.”
- “It was great to see all of us, previous and present workers. Simply Iceland. Takk fyrir mig.”
- “Very great to have a start in the swimming pool and also to visit the nature bath yesterday, a very good idea!”
- “I want to come back !!!!!”
- “Thank you, Pétur and everybody else.”
- “A big thank you.”

- The structure of talking about the project and thinking about new ideas was not very clear at some point because of the frames that were blurred.
- During the discussion with Ari - a variation in experience and the individuality of every volunteer – we did not reach a solid conclusion.
- I remember the nice times that I spend here with the teenagers. Hard work but very informative.
- We worked on a great project and reached more than I expected.
- Satisfying results
- Useful results, very good participation and discussion
- Change of place in the middle of the meeting, VERY GOOD for energy!
- Questions needed clearer formulation, detailed – then maybe we could have been even more helpful.
- A great idea to change the location in the middle of the project. The venue is excellent, I wish to come back again.
- + different ways of working, different persons helping.
- + being so well informed.
- Ari was very, very helpful today to structure the discussions and to focus on the main topics.
- Sometimes it was just too much or too long discussion and maybe a small game or something else (zur Abwechslung) would have been helpful.
- Snow.
- Well prepared group – without could have gone wrong.
- Good to be together as a group.
- It was very good to have Ari here, he helped us make our discussion effective and stay focused.
- Good to have someone (Ari) who helped us come to a point (good results).
- Good to have a leader that is not involved.
- Ari should have used more diverse discussion methods, not only SWAT.
- Ari should have had more clue about what we were doing (about EVS).
- Great, inclusive work of the group, sometimes to facilitate more would be helpful Ari!

PRACTICAL THINGS (organisation, accommodation, food, information, schedule ...)

- Great that some other people could participate (Guðrún, Anna, ...).
- Great to meet all the folks from back in the days.
- All necessary information was given.
- Very good information about the programme were given before arrival and during the stay.
- Good to have the schedule, info and contacts.
- Good not to stick to the schedule too much.
- Good information before the project started, all the important things have been given.
- All the information was flowing very well.
- It would have been nice to have the information about the facts earlier.

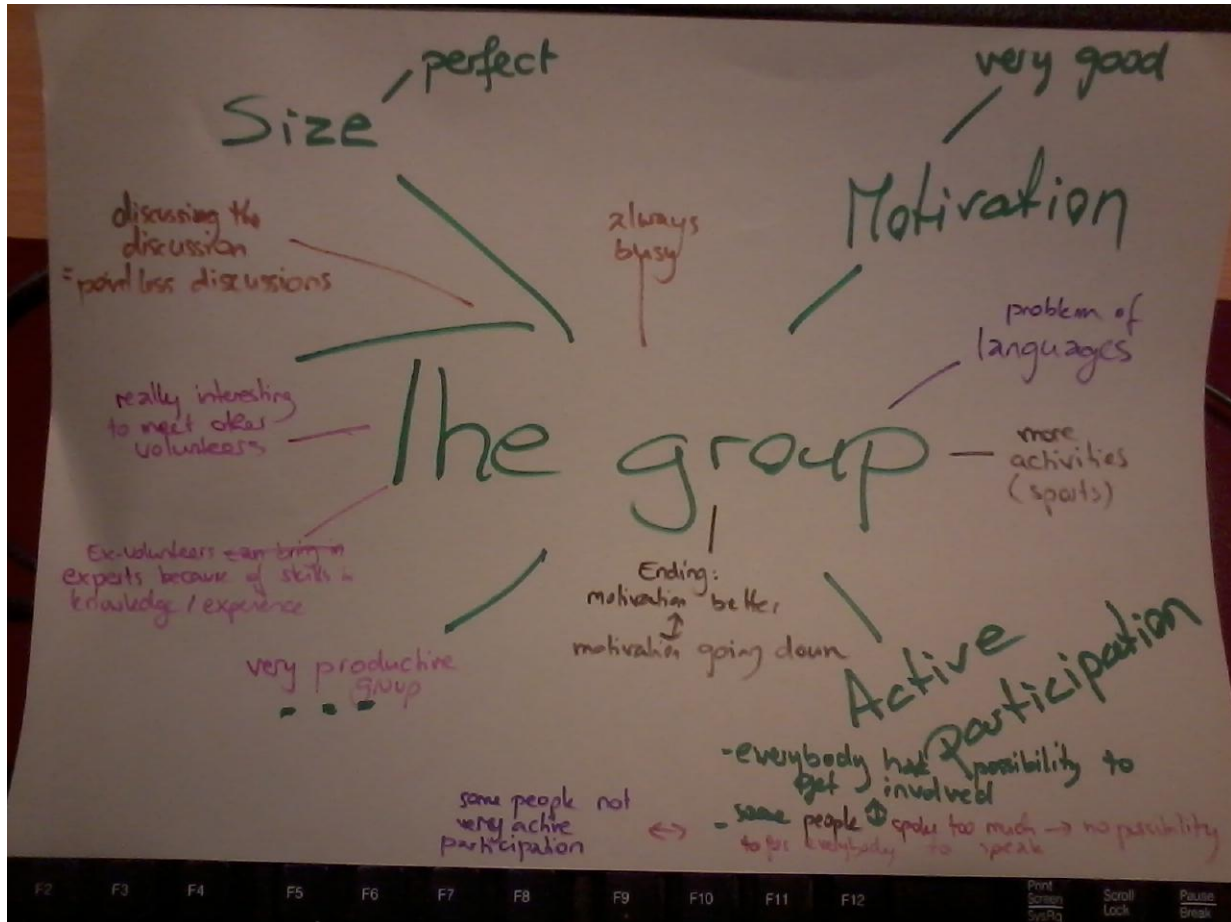
- Accommodation great, food great, sometimes I would appreciate to be better informed about next day(s), but still one of the best projects I have been to!
- Trip to Nature Bath was great.
- Food is good.



- We had more than enough to eat and it was great that there was a diversity in what we ate.
- Very good (and enough) food + very good accommodation.
- + mix of food from different countries/cultures.
- Just perfect.
- + being with an Icelandic family – culture/language, and being together in the group (Vestmannsvatn).
- Nice to be with a host family, someone you got to know during your EVS here ...
- Maybe also good that we did not all live in the same place together, but also together in Vestmannsvatn.
- Really good idea to stay at my place during the project, hosts have been really welcoming.
- Excellent, change of place was very good for group energy.
- It was a nice idea to change the venue to Vestmannsvatn.
- Good that we were not with guest-families only but also together as a group (Vestmannsvatn).

- Good to have Vestmannsvatn to evaluate and to concentrate.
- - too little free time, almost no time to take a breath (though the excursions to Mývatn etc. was of course awesome).
- This meeting had enough time for working process.
- It would be more productive and somewhat effective to have a break in the middle of the project (half a day or so).
- Sad that we did not really have time for the walk through Akureyri.

THE GROUP - Size, motivation, active participation

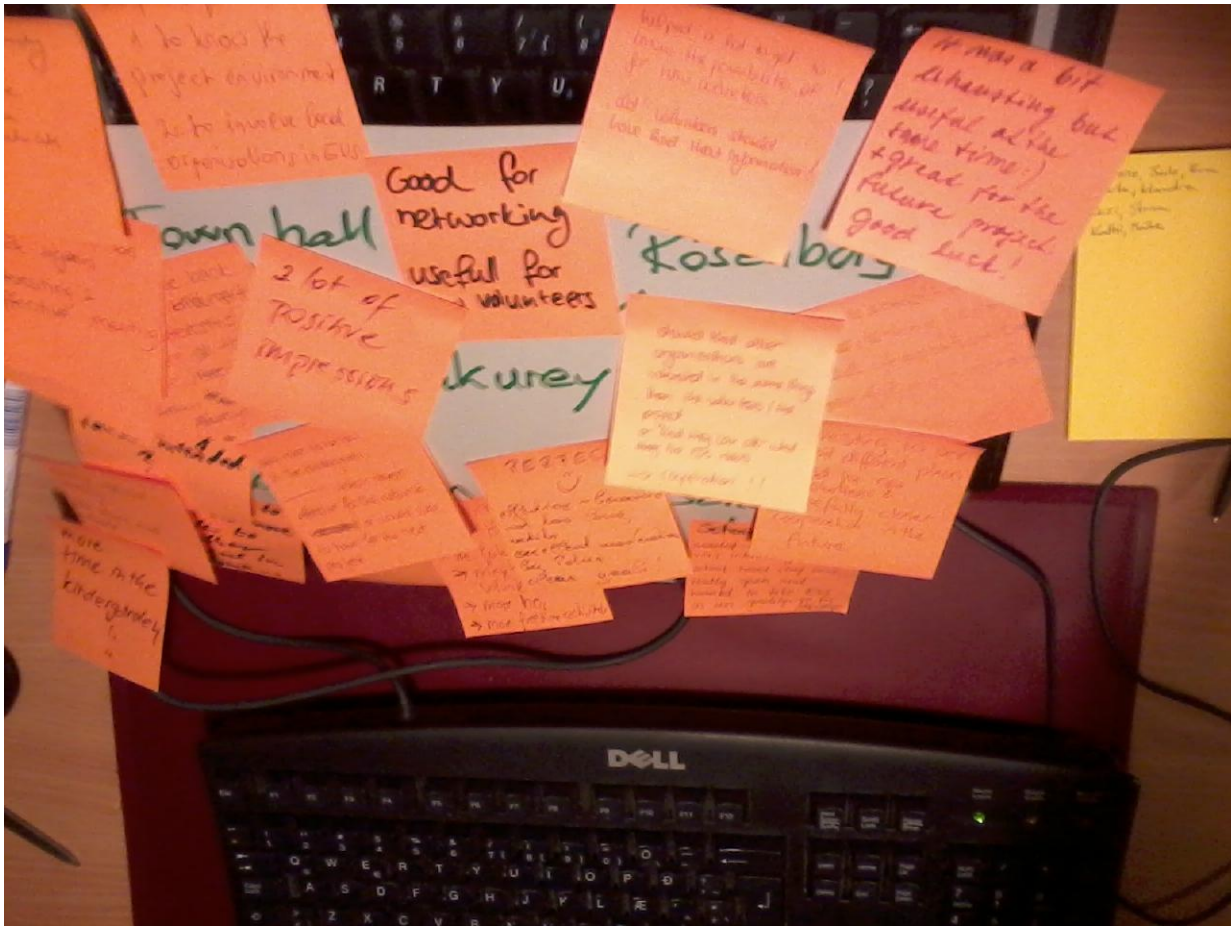


- I have a feeling that some people did not take a very active part in the whole project, or maybe did not fully commit.
- We have been a productive group, good to get to know the other volunteers and to share experiences.
- The size was fine, + motivation + active, but sometimes was discussing [?] the discussion, anyway, nice to meet you.
- Really interesting to meet former volunteers and hear their stories. Interesting people and a lot of fun.

- The group was very engaged in general and the discussions were informative and positive in general.
- Amazing to get to know the other volunteers.
- (mostly) really productive and comfortable atmosphere.
- Everyone was excited to come (back).
- The group size was neither too small nor too big (possible to work in small groups as well).
- Everybody helped.
- We worked well together and had fun.
- Discussion was sometimes hard: To listen to others is important.
- Some people did not give others the opportunity to speak and even interrupted them.
- Difficulties in making decisions / coming to a point (getting the sense of something).
- Some talked too much and deprived others of a possibility to present their opinion!!
- Sometimes in the discussion, it was difficult to say something because some people were speaking a lot.
- Some discussions were too long and pointless because there were different points of view. That was a bit difficult.
- Very productive in the end.
- All have been participating.
- All have been motivated.
- The group was very motivated and interested in the evaluation of the project
- Perfect group size, everybody could have had the possibility to be involved.
- Size = perfect, motivation – a lot.
- Would be more active (sport).
- Motivation and participation, VERY GOOD, maybe declining a little towards the end.
- Ex-volunteers are the best group for helping with new systems of project.
- Always busy.
- Sometimes it was difficult that the “national groups” talked so much in their own language.

VISITAKUREYRI.IS (Town hall, Rósenborg, Kindergarten, School department)

- Very interesting visit, school head chef was open and wanted to take EVS as a quality sign for Akureyri.
- Visit to Town Hall gave a new possibility, also Rosenborg.
- This is something new, I see many opportunities for future cooperation.



- Interesting to see and visit different places, good for new volunteers, hopefully closer cooperation in the future.
- This visit could change the project in the future, maybe more volunteers, more HO, more free time activities.
- Great to make EVS more visible to the other players in town
- Was the whole networking idea intentional?
- Perfect 😊 Effective because visits were not too long. Excellent moderation by Petur, clear goals.
- It was very nice to visit kindergarten. All the memories are back, I can see that my “work” and relation with the teachers and children was good.
- Great to be back in the kindergarten and interesting to see all the places, meet “important” people from Akureyri.
- Kindergarten, very nice to come back again, interesting and effective meeting.
- Kindergarten, really effective meeting, felt home and welcome.
- More time in the kindergarten.
- I was extremely happy to go to the kindergarten and evaluate.
- Very nice to be back again in the kindergarten.
- Visits in Akureyri: Effective for the network I would like to have for the next project.
- Good for networking – useful for new volunteers.

- Great idea to “make” all the volunteers come back to Iceland to evaluate.
- Very good idea to evaluate the project in the environment where it took place, with the people who were / are involved.
- Excellent idea! I highly appreciate the opportunity to see the project and to become aware of all the stuff connected with creating a good project, such as Glerarkirkja.
- Great opportunity to reflect the own project, share knowledge and come back to Iceland.
- Useful for the project, for raising quality of and reflecting EVS in general, making contacts, getting to know people and project, to see the country.
- To use knowledge and to be ready to think over the whole project (to evaluate) is a quality sign for Glerárkirkja and the whole project.
- Development clearly visible + awareness of things taking / needing time.
- Great to be a part of EVS again.
- I really liked the idea to come back to Iceland, to see everything again, meet people, memories, flashbacks ...
- A STEP FURTHER.
- Looking at my project from a slightly different perspective and at another time made the evaluation and reflection more valuable.
- Interesting to hear/see how the project changed.
- Great idea to go back and prepare new things for EVS project.
- Huge personal profit.
- Excellent idea! I can see what I did well and what I could do better. So, note my experience.
- I was so happy to be back in Iceland.
- Great idea, good to invite VO and SO.
- Many flashbacks came to my mind
- It was great to meet the x-volunteers and hear their opinions ... Thanks for inviting me.
- I think that at some point the people from the SO interfered instead of helping.
- I should have been more active in contacting my sending organisation.
- SO was less able to help because they do not know the program very well.
- Where was AUS?
- The discussion / the results are also very useful for us as a sending organisation.

Summary of final evaluation

The essence of the commentary above seems to be about a good, general team spirit and a great atmosphere. Most people also seemed to like the methods used and to have the possibility to reflect again on their EVS learning journey, although some stated that the discussion got sometimes too long and that blurred frames lead to confusion. Yet, this was a good step for EVS.