



THE LIFT

HANDBOOK

sharing experiences of a youth exchange network project

Trans Europe Halles Coordination Office

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Graphic Design: Kulturdesign.se. TEH Map on page 13 produced by Hos Glenn Agency, Malmö, Sweden.

Photographers: Dusan Dobias, Emma Ernsth, Sascha Fülcher, Paola Furlanetto, Hanna Olsson, Rigel Svensson, Karin Sundgren, Alex Veitch, Anna Weitz. The cover photo and the photo on page 35 shows EVS-volunteer Rigel Svensson who was sent by Mejeriet (Lund, Sweden) and hosted by Pekarna magdalenske mreze (Maribor, Slovenia) within the project *The Lift*. The photos were taken by fellow EVS-volunteers during a trip to Croatia.

Printed by: Akut-Tryck, Malmö, Sweden.

A big thank you to all volunteers, sending and hosting organisations that have contributed to this handbook!

Thank you Sandy Fitzgerald for proofreading the texts.

Download the full report from www.teh.net.

CONTENTS

WHY A HANDBOOK?_____	5
<i>Structure and partners</i> _____	5
<i>EVS within the cultural sector</i> _____	8
DESCRIPTION AND OUTCOMES OF THE LIFT PROJECT_____	11
<i>How it came to be</i> _____	11
<i>How was the project organised?</i> _____	15
SHARING EXPERIENCES_____	17
<i>Voices from the sending and hosting organisations</i> _____	17
<i>Voices from the volunteers</i> _____	19
<i>Voice from the Project Manager</i> _____	21
TOP 10 LIST – suggestions from the sending and hosting organisations in TEH_____	25
TOP 5 LIST – suggestions from the Project Manager_____	29
CONCLUSIONS BY THE RESEARCHER_____	31



Paola Furlanetto was sent by Buenaventura (Castelfranco Veneto, Italy) and hosted by Stanica (Zilina, Slovakia) within the project *The Lift*.

WHY A HANDBOOK?

The book that you hold in your hand is the result of evaluations, discussions and meetings held and carried out through the duration of the project *The Lift* – a three-year project (2006–2008) where cultural centres exchanged volunteers within the European network Trans Europe Halles. The aim of the handbook is to offer a tool to organisations that would like to engage in international youth work and start similar network projects in the future.

Structure and partners

ABOUT THE LIFT

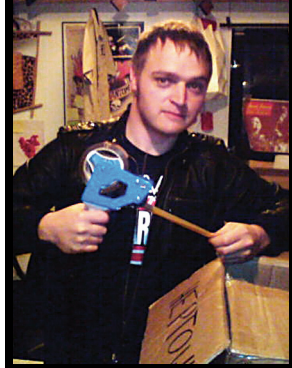
Many young people are engaged as volunteers in the different member centres of the European network Trans Europe Halles. The project *The Lift* (2006–2008) aimed to give these young people

(aged 18–30) the opportunity to go abroad to another member centre as a volunteer for 2–12 months through European Voluntary Service (EVS). More specifically, *The Lift* aimed to coordinate the exchange of volunteers between the member centres, to support and encourage the young volunteers to develop their own project ideas together and to inspire and support the member centres in getting started to send and host volunteers within the EVS scheme. Further, the project also aimed at inspiring organisations in the region of Scania, Sweden, to engage in international youth work through EVS. The project was supported by the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs.

ABOUT TRANS EUROPE HALLES

Trans Europe Halles (TEH) is a European Network of Independent Cultural Centres. Founded in 1983, the network currently has 49 members in

Leif Knüppel was sent by Kulturzentrum Schlachthof (Bremen, Germany) and hosted by Mejeriet (Lund, Sweden) within the project *The Lift*.



25 countries. The mission of TEH is to offer a dynamic forum for ideas, collaborations and mutual support in the pursuit of intercultural exchange, understanding and artistic freedom. Members of TEH all have their own distinguishing features; however they share the same spirit of support for new talent, innovation, young artists and cultural exchange. Many of the members are pioneers in providing opportunities for young people to utilise and develop their artistic skills and in challenging outdated cultural policies.

► www.teh.net

ABOUT MEJERIET

Mejeriet is a multi-disciplinary cultural centre based in an old dairy in Lund, Sweden. Mejeriet's programme has a strong focus on music and the centre is well known for its excellent concert programme. The house also hosts a theatre, a cinema, a café/bar etc. Mejeriet has been a member of TEH for many years, and since 2005 Mejeriet also hosts the Coordination Office of the network.

► www.kulturmejeriet.se

ABOUT YOUTH POLICIES IN THE EU

Different words can be and are used in different times to try to grasp and describe the im-

portance, views and/or position of young people (under the age of 30) in society. In modern politics young people are seen as the future of society and as a consequence they are also the main target group for strategies and policies concerned with establishing the values of tomorrow. The EU has emphasized that this process must involve the people of Europe. The European project is itself young, still forming and still being debated. If it is to make progress, it needs ambition and enthusiasm, and commitment by young people to the values on which it is based. This perspective is clearly stressed in the white paper "A new impetus for European youth" (2001). The white paper is an important milestone in the development of an EU youth policy, a policy that has a great impact on national policies and legislation. These brief quotes and remarks mentioned above represent the foundation of today's youth policies within the EU and are the core values that shape the subsequent action programmes that are of main concern in this handbook; the *YOUTH Programme* (2000–2006) and the *Youth in Action Programme* (2007–2013).

ABOUT THE EU YOUTH PROGRAMMES

2000–2006 (The YOUTH Programme)

The YOUTH programme was the EU's mobility and non-formal education programme targeting young people aged 15 to 25 during 2000–2006. It was open to youth in 31 European countries. The objectives included: integration of young people in society; to fight racism; to foster education in all areas; to promote the development of a European culture.



Representatives from the cultural centres Stanica, Halles de Schaerbeek, P60 and Polymer discussing youth exchanges during the EVS-seminar hosted by ACC Metelkova mesto, Ljubljana, Slovenia.

2007–2013 (The Youth in Action programme)

Youth in Action is the successor of the YOUTH Programme and is built on the response to the evaluations and needs of young people made during the YOUTH Programme. The Programme targets young people aged 15–28 (in some cases 13–30). It aims to inspire a sense of active citizenship, solidarity and tolerance among young Europeans and to involve them in shaping the Union's future. The programme is divided into five actions (Action 1 – Youth for Europe, Action 2 – EVS, Action 3 – Youth in the World, Action 4 – Youth Support Systems and Action 5 – Support for European Co-operation in the Youth field).

► ec.europa.eu/youth/index_en.htm

ABOUT EVS

EVS, or European Voluntary Service, is a youth mobility scheme that is part of the EU Programme Youth in Action. EVS gives all young people (aged 18–30) the chance to do voluntary service abroad for 2–12 months. All costs during the young person's stay abroad such as travel, food, accommodation, insurance, language training, local transports and pocket money are covered by the EVS scheme. An EVS exchange requires co-operation between three key players: a sending organisation, a hosting organisation and a 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.

► ec.europa.eu/youth/index_en.htm ■



EVS within the cultural sector

One of the objectives of the previous YOUTH Programme was to foster a better understanding of the cultural diversity of Europe. The new Youth in Action Programme also seeks to promote linguistic and cultural diversity. The cultural sector is in itself a sector with a long tradition of voluntary work. This "bias" in relation to experience and readiness to work with volunteers makes the EVS scheme quite suitable for the cultural sector. Prior to the project *The Lift*, TEH also realized another EVS-project called YEP (1997–1998). Below you will find some other examples of past and current EVS-projects within the cultural sector:

EXAMPLES OF EVS PROJECTS IN THE CULTURAL SECTOR

Pépinières européennes pour jeunes artistes

For more than 15 years, the NGO Pépinières européennes pour jeunes artistes (Paris, France) has been an active promoter of the exchange of artists within the cultural sector. Over the years 450 artists have been promoted to the international scene by Pépinières, and Pépinières has also contributed to creating professional and social links between more than 3000 people on the international cultural scene. To support and promote a younger generation of artists who are inventing new forms of expression by redrawing the place of the artist in his/her relation to the other, Pépinières set up the Artists in Context Project. For more than 6 years, this mobility programme (realized with the help of EVS) has enabled some 60 creative artists to develop their projects.

➤ www.art4eu.net

Friends at Stanica attending Paola Furlanetto's goodbye-party.



Dance/theatre performance PUR SUCRE, Compagnie Atmen at Stanica (Žilina, Slovakia).

European Voluntary Service – a capital idea

When Luxembourg became the European Capital of Culture for the second time in 2007, the City wanted to involve young people from across Europe in its celebrations - not just for pleasure, but also as valued contributors. Through EVS, young people from Lithuania in the north to Portugal in the south came together in the City to work on a range of cultural management tasks. The volunteers had their own website, which still serves as a record of their work and a place to exchange ideas.

➤ www.volontaires.lu

Volunteering together: The “Roma-Gadje Dialogue through Service” initiative

Roma communities are often isolated, with little communication or understanding between them and society at large. The Roma-Gadje project brings Roma and non-Roma youth together in voluntary service activities, within the EU as well as non-EU countries in Central and Eastern Europe, with the aim of increasing mutual under-

standing. The current project, running from 2007 to 2009, is the successor to a previous 18-month project. Youngsters from different backgrounds work together on long- and short-term projects in 11 countries. The project aims to involve 75 youngsters in total, half from Roma communities. The previous initiative is already reported to have had a strong impact on both communities and participants. The project brings together voluntary service organisations, youth organisations and Roma cultural and social centres from all countries involved.

➤ www.rgds.net/welcome.html

Blogs

Several interesting and inspiring exchanges are made public through the stories told by the volunteers themselves. On the blog Myeys you can find several examples of successful exchanges within the cultural field and learn more about how these exchanges have contributed to the development of both the volunteers and the hosting organisations.

➤ www.myeys.net



Alex Veitch was sent by Mejeriet (Lund, Sweden) and hosted by Pekarna magdalenske mreze (Maribor, Slovenia) within the project *The Lift*.

DESCRIPTION AND OUTCOME OF THE PROJECT *THE LIFT*

How it came to be

Before setting up the project and applying for funds, the decision to focus on youth exchanges through EVS within the network was discussed at several TEH Meetings in 2004/2005. In this phase, all members of TEH were interviewed and informed about EVS and how it works. They were also asked to fill in questionnaires to explain their capacity in sending and/or hosting young people in their centre. The objectives of *The Lift* were all agreed to by TEH and its members before the start of the project.

While the application to realize *The Lift* was processed by the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs, a seminar about EVS was organised in connection with the TEH Meeting hosted by ACC Metelkova mesto in Ljubljana, Slovenia (May

2006). The seminar was organised with funds from the Youth in Action Programme.

One of the purposes of the seminar was to ensure that all members of TEH had the same level of knowledge about the EVS scheme. The aim of the seminar was also to allow for TEH members to get to know each other better and in that way to facilitate the matchmaking and quality of future EVS exchanges. During the seminar an EVS Core Group was formed with members from different TEH centres. The purpose of the EVS Core Group was to form a group that would help to further develop the project and discuss issues such as quality/evaluation, communication tools and project activities together with the Project Manager.

Soon after the seminar, *The Lift* was awarded a grant by the Swedish National Board for Youth

TEH MEMBERS ACCREDITED TO WORK WITH EVS

Members active before <i>The Lift</i>		
1	Buenaventura	Castelfranco Veneto Italy
2	Mejeriet	Lund Sweden
3	Metelkova	Ljubljana Slovenia
4	Pekarna – Magdalenske mreže	Maribor Slovenia
5	Stanica	Zilina Slovakia
Members active through <i>The Lift</i>		
6	A38	Budapest Hungary
7	Arts Printing House	Vilnius Lithuania
8	Ateneu Popular	Barcelona Spain
9	CityArts	Dublin Ireland
10	Kaapelitehdas	Helsinki Finland
11	Kulturzentrum Schlachthof	Bremen Germany
12	Mains d'Oeuvres	St Ouen France
13	Melkweg	Amsterdam The Netherlands
14	Moritzbastei	Leipzig Germany
15	NOASS	Riga Latvia
16	Parkteatret	Oslo Norway
17	P60	Amstelveen The Netherlands
18	Polymer	Tallinn Estonia
19	REX	Belgrade Serbia
20	Subtopia	Stockholm Sweden
21	The Junction	Cambridge U.K.
22	WUK	Vienna Austria

Numbers are indicated on the map.

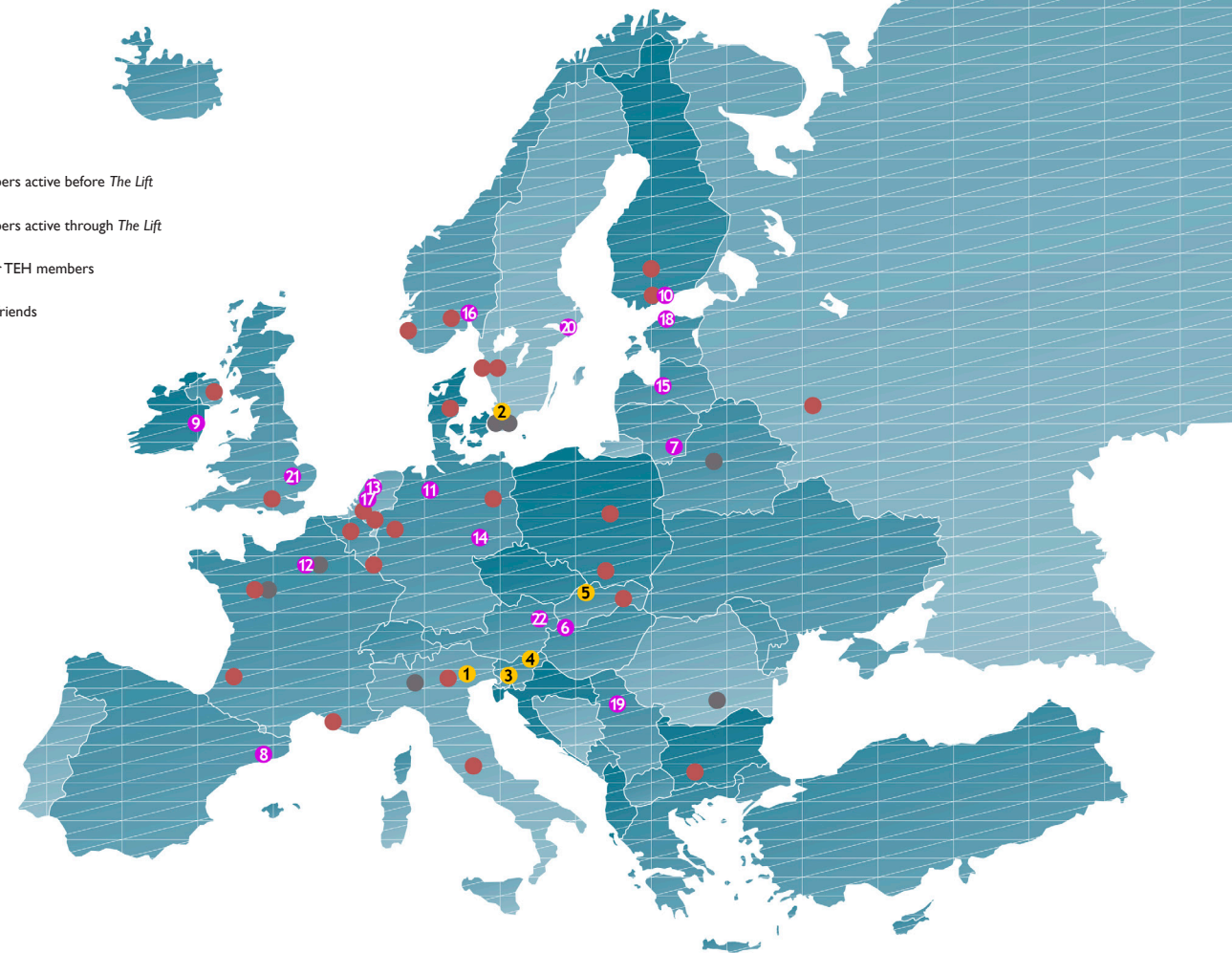
The member centre Cló Ceardlann and the Friend Organisation D'altrocanto left the network during the course of the project and are therefore not included in the list above.

LIST OF PARTICIPATING VOLUNTEERS

Name	Sent by	Hosted by
1 Alex Veitch	Mejeriet	Pekarna
2 Anna di Muro	Buenaventura	A38
3 Anna Weitz	Mejeriet	REX
4 Elisa Giolo	D'altrocanto	Cló Ceardlann
5 Grace Kyne-Lilley	The Junction	Stanica
6 Jussi Syrenius	Kaapelitehdas	Melkweg
7 Karin Sundgren	Mejeriet	Buenaventura
8 Leif Knüppel	Schlachthof	Mejeriet
9 Leila Hatteea	Mains D'Oeuvres	Parkteatret
10 Paola Furlanetto	Buenaventura	Stanica
11 Rigel Svensson	Mejeriet	Pekarna
12 Sascha Fülischer	Mejeriet	REX
13 Veronika Benova	Stanica	Mains d'Oeuvres
14 Silvia Janoskova	Stanica	P60
15 Silvia Busilacchi	Buenaventura	Mains d'Oeuvres
16 Paola Daniolo	Buenaventura	REX

These volunteers were sent and hosted between members and Friend Organisations of TEH for periods of 4–12 months within the frame of the project *The Lift* 2006–2008.

- Members active before *The Lift*
- Members active through *The Lift*
- Other TEH members
- TEH friends



TIME LINE

November 2004

Discussions about the interest of the project idea at TEH Meeting 58 hosted by ufa-fabrik in Berlin, Germany.

Spring 2005

Interviews with the centres that had shown an interest in the project idea. Further discussions at TEH Meeting 59 hosted by Buenaventura in Castelfranco Veneto, Italy.

Autumn 2005

Research on potential funders for the project. Discussions started with the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs.

January 2006

Application sent to the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs.

May 2006

Seminar about EVS in connection to TEH Meeting 60 hosted by ACC Metelkova mesto in Ljubljana, Slovenia, in order to ensure that all potential project partners had the same level of knowledge about the EVS scheme. Late May: positive answer from the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs.

August 2006

The Lift started and Emma Ernsth was employed as Project Manager based in the TEH Coordination Office.

2007

The project is up and running, more centres continuously join the project.

2008

Additional funds are applied for from the Youth in Action Programme to organize an evaluation meeting of the project. The application is granted and the evaluation meeting is hosted by Mejeriet in Lund, Sweden, June 8th–10th. A Researcher is hired to do an unbiased evaluation of the project.

2009–

By being partners in the project, TEH Members and Friends now have the knowledge and experience they need to be able to support each other and work with the EVS scheme independently. TEH continues to facilitate and promote the realization of youth exchanges through EVS within the network. A handbook about the project is produced and disseminated in the beginning of 2009.

Karin Sundgren was sent by Mejeriet (Lund, Sweden) and hosted by Buenaventura (Castelfranco Veneto, Italy) within the project The Lift.



Affairs and the Project Manager started working on the project the 1st of August 2006. TEH members that joined the project were all asked to sign a Platform Agreement that outlined the responsibilities of the project partners. At a later stage, a check list for EVS exchanges in TEH was produced that further clarified the responsibilities of the sending and hosting organisations and volunteers in the network.

The project has been evaluated continuously. Interviews have been conducted with all sending and hosting organisations and with all volunteers. In 2008, a Researcher evaluated the project. In addition, an Evaluation Meeting for all sending and hosting organisations was organised with funds from the EU Youth in Action Programme. The Evaluation Meeting was hosted by Mejeriet in Lund, Sweden. Funds were also applied for to organise an Evaluation Meeting for all volunteers in connection with TEH Meeting 66 at Tou Scene (Stavanger, Norway, 18th-21st of September 2008), but this second Evaluation Meeting was not granted.

WHAT WERE THE OBJECTIVES OF THE LIFT?

- To give young people who are connected to the different cultural centres of the network the chance to go abroad and do voluntary service in another centre of the network. The EVS exchanges realized within the project should be of high quality and well-prepared and should contribute to the volunteers' professional development as well as strengthen their European awareness.

- To strengthen the relations between the members of TEH.
- To increase the number of youth exchanges within the network.
- To facilitate volunteers to get to know each other and to encourage them to realize projects together.
- To inspire organisations in the region of Scania to engage in international youth work through EVS.

How was the project organised?

The Lift has been run by a Project Manager working full-time in the TEH Coordination Office. The tasks of the Project Manager included:

- Supporting TEH members in the process of becoming accredited to work with the EVS scheme as well as giving advice about how to fill in the EVS application form. Other tasks included marketing, communication and matchmaking between sending and hosting organisations and potential volunteers.
- Evaluating the exchanges together with the sending and hosting organisations in TEH as well as the volunteers.
- Facilitating communication between the volunteers and informing them about the funding opportunities in the Youth in Action Programme.
- Distributing information about EVS on a regional level.

WHO WERE THE PARTNERS?

The project was managed by TEH in collaboration with Mejeriet. When the project started, Mejeriet's regional youth project Storasöder was also a partner. Storasöder was supposed to become a permanent project, but was refused a grant by the region of Scania to continue in 2008. The youth exchanges in the project were realized between TEH Members and Friend Organisations. Since the project was supported by the Swedish Na-

tional Board for Youth Affairs, the Project Manager also worked with establishing contacts with local and regional partners through the project, as well as informing young people and youth NGO's on local/regional/national levels about EVS.

WHAT WAS THE BUDGET FOR THE PROJECT?

The annual grant from the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs* has covered the salary and travel of the Project Manager; the costs for evaluating the project (Researcher), plus marketing, communication and administration. Besides the grant from the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs, Mejeriet has made a significant investment towards the costs of the project in terms of offering free office space and equipment plus contributing with the salary of the accountant and general support and management/monitoring of the project. The members in TEH that have been partners in the project have also made substantial investments in the project in terms of time. They have also paid all costs related to attending TEH Meetings (where the project has been developed and evaluated) themselves. The EVS exchanges are realized with separate budgets that come from additional funding that the sending/hosting organisations apply for to the Youth in Action Programme. ■

* August 2006–March 2007: 190 000 SEK (approx. 18 820 €), March 2007–December 2007: 300 000 SEK (approx. 29 720 €), January 2008–December 2008: 490 000 SEK (approx. 48 540 €).



Silvia Busilacchi was sent by Buenaventura (Castelfranco Veneto, Italy) and hosted by Mains d'Oeuvres (St Ouen, France) within the project The Lift.

SHARING EXPERIENCES

Voices from the sending and hosting organisations

The experiences from the project period are many. Below you will find some quotes that will give you an idea of the thoughts of the partners in the different stages of the EVS exchange.

PLANNING

"To be able to meet the prospective volunteers before the exchange would strongly affect the actual exchange in a positive way, for example; we could more easily find a specific assignment directly, and place the right amount of expectations on the volunteer."

P60, Amstelveen, the Netherlands

"With the project I think we increased the pos-

sibility to get more out of the exchange. As both a hosting and a sending organisation, we want to plan as much as possible before the actual exchange, with trust comes better planning, and we have good trust within the network. To have the project in the network led to better planning and better exchanges."

Buenaventura, Castelfranco Veneto, Italy

"The project made it easier to get in contact with others involved in exchanges, to share ideas and knowledge and to learn about how to go about engaging in an exchange."

Pekarna magdalenske mreze, Maribor, Slovenia

DURING

"Sometimes it is very hard to know how much one could expect from a volunteer; it differs from one volunteer to another, and it is very important that the staff in the cultural centre is informed and

DJ Effiks and Batcha
de Mental at Stanica
(Zilina, Slovakia).



have the time to be a mentor and guide to the newly arrived."

Melkweg, Amsterdam, the Netherlands

"Thanks to the project we could really begin working with EVS, with the help from the Project Manager we got information and contacts so that today we can host several volunteers and give them a meaningful experience as well as give our centre some new perspectives."

Stanica, Zilina, Slovakia

"It takes time to work with volunteers; one has to consider this before engaging. If one has the time it is a very rewarding experience and it will lead to many new ideas."

A38, Budapest, Hungary

"Through the project the network TEH became alive, the project manifests the network, and this is a perfect example of how we can gain from the network in everyday life at our centres."

P60, Amstelveen, the Netherlands

"I think we are very different as organisations within the network, and through this project I think we have learned much about each other, how we structure our work, how we look upon volunteers, etc. It has been a very good experience."

Parkteatret, Oslo, Norway

AFTER

"It is easy to forget what one could do after the exchange is over. By facilitating the work after the exchange in a structured way (exhibitions, workshops etc) the ties between the centres in the network could be strengthened even more."

Buenaventura, Castelfranco Veneto, Italy

"In the project the experiences that have been made have been collected by the Project Manager. To have a Project Manager that actively gathers the experiences from the partners has been very useful."

Mains D'Oeuvres, St Ouen, France

Voices from the volunteers

Below you will find some quotes from volunteers sharing their experiences of what can be gained from EVS.

"When I came in contact with my sending organisation Mejeriet for the first time, I did not imagine that I would later go abroad through EVS and after that work with culture. The EVS period really gave me tools and experiences that I use in my life today. I am really happy to have been given this opportunity to learn."

Karin Sundgren

Sent by: Mejeriet, Lund, Sweden.

Hosted by: Buenaventura, Castelfranco Veneto, Italy.

"I have learned much about other people and cultures, how to interact and I even look upon my own life with different eyes."

Rigel Svensson

Sent by: Mejeriet, Lund, Sweden.

Hosted by: Pekarna magdalenske mreze, Maribor, Slovenia.

"I gained very much from going abroad through EVS. Before I did I had many contacts within the sector and I also met many people locally and internationally, but after my time as a volunteer I got a much broader network. Today I use this in my travels and work."

Leif Knüppel

Sent by: Kulturzentrum Schlachthof, Bremen, Germany.

Hosted by: Mejeriet, Lund, Sweden.

"In only just one month I already got the chance to participate in my first EVS meeting and the week after to attend my first TEH Meeting. It's a good thing to get the opportunity to meet some



Leila Hatteea was sent by Mains d'Oeuvres (St Ouen, France) and hosted by Parkteatret (Oslo, Norway) within the project The Lift.

Hard work during the EVS-seminar hosted by ACC Metelkova mesto, Ljubljana, Slovenia.



of the other volunteers at the very beginning and to share a bit of their experience."

Leila Hatteea

Sent by: Mains d'Oeuvres, St Ouen, France.
Hosted by: Parkteatret, Oslo, Norway.

"It was fascinating to sit around a table for dinner and talk to people from Slovakia, Italy and Latvia and compare our views on things. Working at Stanica gave me the opportunity to try things I had never tried before, like performing and meeting with dancers and artists from France and Poland."

Grace Kyne-Lilley

Sent by: The Junction, Cambridge, United Kingdom.
Hosted by: Stanica, Zilina, Slovakia.

"For me my EVS has been a possibility to create. I have time to work with the Pro downloading films animation, plan a documentary about the effect

the international community has had in Kosovo and start planning for video activist screenings in Maribor. It's been great to be here!"

Alex Veitch

Sent by: Mejeriet, Lund, Sweden.
Hosted by: Pekarna magdalenske mreze, Maribor, Slovenia.

"My EVS-experience totally changed my fields of interest. I've studied social work, so for me working with theatre, Art and dance was new – at least working with it backstage. Living and working in Slovakia was the first time I felt like a real stranger; also because of the language. I think it was good that Stanica hosted more than one EVS-volunteer at the same time."

Paola Furlanetto

Sent by: Buenaventura, Castelfranco Veneto, Italy.
Hosted by: Stanica, Zilina, Slovakia.



Emma Ernsth presenting TEH and EVS to TEH member centre OZU, Monteleone Sabino, Italy.

Voice from the Project Manager

Text by Emma Ernsth,
Project Manager of *The Lift*

In general, *The Lift* has been a successful project. It has been delivered as promised, completed on time and completed within the budget. The project has achieved most of its goals and met most of its stakeholders' expectations. At the Evaluation Meeting in June 2008 the TEH centres took a joint decision to continue to work with EVS after the project which means that the project has facilitated for EVS exchanges to become a permanent activity of the network. Looking back there are, however, a few things that are worth reflecting

upon. The challenges that we have encountered can be summarised in the following areas:

- The number of volunteers
- The involvement of the project partners
- The involvement of the volunteers
- The different target groups

THE NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS

Fewer volunteers were sent and hosted within the project than we expected and there are many different reasons for this. Even if the mobility scheme has its problems, EVS is still a great opportunity for young people who want to work abroad. Recruiting the volunteers has, however, taken a lot longer and been a bigger challenge than we expected it to be. The recruiting of volunteers would most likely have been helped by an initial, bigger investment

Elisa Giolo was sent by D'altrocanto (Mirano, Italy) and hosted by Cló Ceardlann (Co Dhún na nGall, Ireland) within the project *The Lift*.



in direct marketing material for young people in the different TEH centres. Even with this though, exchanging the number of volunteers that we estimated would still have been technically impossible. This is mainly because of three reasons. First of all, *The Lift* started right in the shift between two youth programmes. In August 2006, the old EU Youth Programme was still running, but in January 2007 the new EU Youth in Action Programme 2007-2013 was introduced. This meant that the Project Manager had to spend a lot of time learning about the new Programme in order to be able to support the TEH centres in the right way. Even if there were not a lot of big changes concerning EVS in the new Programme, many TEH centres found the new application forms exhausting since you have to use the same application and answer the same amount of questions regardless if you want to exchange one volunteer or one hundred volunteers. Even though the Project Manager produced templates for how to fill in the application forms, the shift of youth programmes affected the number of volunteers exchanged since it was time-consuming both for the Project Manager and the project partners. Secondly, the time that it took for the TEH centres to become accredited by their respective National Agencies varied a lot.

Some National Agencies were so inundated with work that it took them up to a year to get back on accreditation applications. Apart from affecting the number of potential exchanges within the project, this also meant that some centres gave up and lost their motivation to become accredited. Thirdly, some exchanges were never realized because potential volunteers changed their mind about going or because the period that they wanted to go did not fit any of the hosting TEH centres. Some applications were also not granted which obviously lowered the number of exchanges too. It is worth noting that several TEH centres had low confidence in their National Agencies because of not giving enough nor the appropriate help and support, because of different National Agencies interpreting the same rules differently and because of National Agencies rejecting applications without disclosing what motivated their decision that is clear enough to help you write a 'better' application the next time.

THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE PROJECT PARTNERS

The project partners in *The Lift* were not formal project partners. Apart from expressing interest in sending and/or hosting EVS volunteers and signing the Platform Agreement, none of them signed any legally binding contract concerning rights and responsibilities. The whole project was based on the TEH centres' passion for the network, engagement in the project and their staffs' voluntary work to make it happen. As much as this is a beautiful thing, it also makes projects very fragile. With just one Project Manager being paid to work on

the project, it is hard to demand time and energy from the project partners. Just applying for and realizing an EVS exchange in itself requires a lot of voluntary engagement from the TEH centres. Asking the TEH centres to perform additional tasks related to *The Lift* sometimes proved to be tricky. Creating a functioning EVS Core Group (a group with representatives from different TEH centres supporting the Project Manager with the development of the project) was also challenging. It is not easy to maintain continuity when people so often change positions and work places. Consulting TEH centres about the project in connection with TEH Meetings worked very well, but managing to get an EVS Core Group to work on the project in between the biannual TEH Meetings proved to be very difficult. It would of course never have been possible to realize *The Lift* without the hard work of the dedicated project partners, but it is still a fact that it is good to think twice and match ambitions with resources. Especially if you are not able to reimburse the project partners financially from the project budget and write binding agreements concerning what is expected from them.

THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE VOLUNTEERS

The budget of *The Lift* contained no travel support or project money for volunteers to meet and realize projects together. All volunteers were put in contact with each other and a blog was established where the volunteers could write about their experiences abroad. With the financial help of their sending and hosting centres plus personal investments, some volunteers also met at



Gabriella Móra from A38, Budapest, Hungary. They hosted their first EVS volunteer through the project *The Lift*.

the biannual TEH Meetings. In addition, the Project Manager continuously informed the volunteers about different funding opportunities in the EU Youth in Action Programme. The volunteers felt differently about getting to know each other and working together. Some often wrote on the blog and to the Project Manager, travelled to meet other volunteers from the project and came to the TEH Meetings while others hardly responded to emails. Going abroad to work in a new environment is a big thing in itself. When you become an EVS volunteer you are also automatically invited to preparatory and mid-term meetings with other volunteers. These meetings are financed by the EVS scheme. For most volunteers in *The Lift* it was difficult to separate the EVS scheme, the TEH network and the project *The Lift* from each other. They already got to know a lot of new people at preparatory meetings and in their hosting centres and mostly did not feel any special motivation to collaborate with the other volunteers from *The Lift*. In order for this to have happened, the project would have needed additional funding for the volunteers to meet and exchange ideas in a structured way. Funds were applied for to organise an Evaluation Meeting for all volunteers in connection with TEH Meeting 66 at Tou Scene (Stavanger,



Norway, 18th-21st of September 2008), but unfortunately it was not granted.

THE DIFFERENT TARGET GROUPS

The objectives of *The Lift* aim at reaching and involving several different target groups: TEH centres and potential volunteers in the centres, the volunteers that are sent and hosted within the project and organisations in the region of Scania. Of course, regardless of whether you have the financial means to realize a project on your own budget or not, very often you still have to take the wishes of many different stakeholders into account. If you are a network or a member organisation, your members will most likely have opinions. If you are applying for funding you have to take the funding body's wishes and criteria into account and so on. Still, *The Lift* would most likely still have benefited from having fewer target groups. Working with fewer target groups would have made it possible to work in a more focused way and would allow for spending more time on supporting the target groups involved. One way of solving

this could have been to focus the support from the Project Manager to organisations and the organisational level only. This has, in fact, been the area where the Project Manager has been most needed and invested most of the work-hours, and, as mentioned above, the project would have needed extra funding to have been able to implement a more structured collaboration between the volunteers anyway. When talking about target groups, it is also important to clearly define what kind of support you can and cannot offer to the different target groups. This has been challenging concerning the organisations in the region of Scania. The idea was to use *The Lift* as a best practice example and, in that way, inspire more organisations to engage in international youth work. However, when they later understood that they could not join *The Lift* (since they did not fulfil the criteria to join TEH), some of them felt disappointed. Specifying the type and amount of support that regional organisations could expect from the Project Manager would have helped as a guideline. ■



Mari-Anne Finsen
Bjørningstad from
Parkteatret, Oslo,
Norway. At Parkteatret
they involved the whole
staff team in giving
a 10 min language
lesson each to the EVS
volunteers on regular
basis.

TOP 10 LIST: SUGGESTIONS FROM THE SENDING AND HOSTING ORGANISATIONS IN TEH

The list below was put together by the sending and hosting organisations in TEH when meeting at the Evaluation Meeting at Mejeriet, Lund, Sweden, the 8th-10th of June 2008.

BEFORE ENGAGING IN THE ACTUAL EXCHANGE (THE PLANNING STAGE)

1. Analyze finances / good economy of the EVS

To be able to get the most out of an exchange it is essential that the financial conditions are well thought through from both the sending and hosting organisation – and a well-supported budget be devised. It could also be a good idea to seek additional funding as a way to increase the possibilities of the exchange. For some hosting or-

ganisations a good economy could be achieved by hosting two or more volunteers at the same time or arrange for different volunteers overlapping in time (a concept that is usually supported by the volunteers themselves). In relation to economy, some of the funding should be used to arrange pre-departure language courses, hereby making the actual stay and the time at the hosting organisation more useful for all.

2. Strengthen the dialogue between sending and hosting organisations

Several representatives from the hosting and sending organisations have come back to the importance of a good dialogue between the two organisations before the actual exchange. This dialogue should aim at establishing a common ground of

Emiliano Bon from Xena, Padova, Italy. Emiliano's long experience of coordinating EVS exchanges for TEH member Buenaventura was of big help to the project The Lift.



expectations – i.e. what can be expected in terms of the outcome, the workload, the volunteer and the follow-up activities. If the exchange is realized within a network it might be a good idea to let the network delegate in the respective organisations be the node of connection.

3. Learn as much as you can about the volunteer(s)

Try to learn as much as possible about who the potential volunteer is (competencies, experiences, needs, wishes, etc.) beforehand. The most effective way would of course be to meet the volunteer before the exchange. Due to the costs involved this might not always be possible. Instead the information can be acquired by compiling a simple questionnaire for the volunteer to fill in or by asking the volunteer to write a short motivation etc.

4. Plan activities and organisations' readiness in advance

Prepare the team in your organisation for the arrival of the volunteer. To make the exchange as good as possible it is important to not only prepare the staff that is going to work directly with the volunteer but to take some time to inform the whole staff about the exchange, the expectations and the volunteer. It is also a good idea to make a

“default list” of tasks that the volunteer can work with. This way your team will feel that they have tasks to give from day one and the volunteer also feels he/she can contribute with something right from the start. As time goes by the list of tasks should of course become more challenging based on the interests of the volunteer.

DURING THE ACTUAL EXCHANGE (THE ACTION STAGE)

5. Separate mentor (outside) from coordinator (inside the hosting organisation)

Make sure the volunteer has both a coordinator to turn to from within your organisation and a mentor to turn to from outside your organisation. The role of the coordinator is more of a work leader while the mentor functions as a buddy that the volunteer can turn to concerning various issues related to everyday life abroad (where to buy food, what cafés/clubs to go to etc.)

6. Encourage socializing outside the workplace

Encourage the volunteer to learn more about his/her new city/village, country, culture etc. and to socialize with people outside the hosting organisation.

7. Encourage the volunteer to bond with other team members

Creating a good relationship between the staff and the volunteer increases the chances for a successful exchange. This can be achieved with simple means, for instance by organising a weekly 10-minute language training session with different members of your staff and the volunteer.



Anna Weitz and Alex Veitch were both sent by Mejeriet (Lund, Sweden). Anna was hosted by REX (Belgrade, Serbia) and Alex by Pekarna magdalenske mreze (Maribor, Slovenia).

8. Involve the volunteer in activities to promote EVS

If the volunteer feels up to it, it is usually a good idea to involve the volunteer in promoting EVS on local level, as a kind of informal “EVS-ambassador”. This gives the volunteer the chance to share his/her experiences and get to know other young people and organisations in his/her new country. It also helps to spread information about EVS to potential future volunteers.

AFTER THE ACTUAL EXCHANGE (THE FOLLOW-UP STAGE)

9. Bring the volunteer's experience back to the sending organisation

Facilitating the realization of different activities where the volunteer gets the chance to share his/her experiences might lead to unexpected outcomes of the exchange. For example: the sending and hosting organisation could get better con-

nected and want to realize additional projects/exchanges together; the volunteer could inspire more young people to go abroad through EVS; the skills acquired during the exchange could become more visible; the staff in the sending organisation could get more “hands on” information about EVS, etc.

10. Work on the EVS continuity and development

EVS should not be used as a funding possibility. One should be aware of the work needed to engage in an exchange and not simply look at it as a means to get funding. Once engaged in the scheme, it is important to work with a perspective that stretches beyond the actual exchange to be able to realise the full potential of the EVS exchange. Organisations involved in an EVS exchange should follow-up, disseminate their experiences and try to involve themselves in the development of the EVS exchange. ■



Emma Ernsth, Project Manager of The Lift.

TOP 5 LIST: SUGGESTIONS FROM THE PROJECT MANAGER

Text by Emma Ernsth,
Project Manager of The Lift.

1. Write a SMART project description

When writing the project description, always double-check if your objectives are SMART (S for specific, M for measurable, A for achievable or agreed to, R for realistic or rewarding, T for time-based. The SMART check-list is a tool often listed in literature on Project Management). Specify numbers and time frames as often as possible so that it is easy to continuously evaluate and adjust the objectives as time goes by.

2. Realistic forecasts of the number of volunteers

If you do not design the project so that you identify the volunteers before the project starts, make a qualified guess of how many volunteers you think you will exchange and divide it by two. Recruiting

and matchmaking of volunteers usually takes a lot more time than you think.

3. Work with volunteers as ambassadors

Allocate sufficient resources for an information campaign and marketing material for young people when the project starts. Once the volunteers go back home again, they are usually the best EVS Marketing & Communication Managers you will ever be able to get. If they are willing to act as informal EVS-ambassadors, take the opportunity to involve them. Nothing beats a story told face-to-face by someone who has experienced EVS him/herself.

4. Limit your target groups

Depending on your resources, carefully consider how many different target groups the project should aim at reaching and/or involving. Clearly



specify what the different target groups can expect from the project.

5. Clearly define functions etc. in the project

Aim at reimbursing/financially supporting all project partners in some way (and the volunteers if you want to involve them in the project activities). Write a simple agreement that gives you an overview of each partner's rights and responsibilities. ■

An unusual bride at Pekarna magdalenske mreze (Maribor, Slovenia).



Mathias Blob from Benson Consulting, Malmö, Sweden. Mathias followed the work of the Project Manager and project partners for a whole year and also conducted an evaluation report of The Lift.

CONCLUSIONS BY THE RESEARCHER

Text by Mathias Blob, Researcher at Benson Consulting, Malmö, Sweden.

As a Researcher who has been given the opportunity to follow the last year of the project, I do have some thoughts about the project that can be useful for those of you that are interested in engaging in the development or deployment of an EVS project in the future. In this handbook I will briefly list some basic comments and for those with a more keen interest in reading the details of my thoughts I recommend the full evaluation report (that can be downloaded on www.teh.net). In general, I have come to the same conclusion as the Project Manager; *The Lift* has been a successful project in terms of deliverance. This being said, it is important to look at what "we" have learned and what could be shared with others that want to realize a similar project. Below, five areas of potential development will be presented.

1. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the project can be divided into several sub-objectives. The main objective is to foster the youth exchange programme. The sub-objectives are in some sense very different in scope and specification and at the same time very closely linked and perceived. This mainly reflects the difference between theory and practice. In the former things seem to be very linked and easy to achieve within the same structures and in the latter we are confronted with the basic circumstances of everyday life and the theoretical rationality is not that valid any more. This being said, the objectives do not have an inherent counter productiveness, but it is hard for a project to serve several "masters" at the same time and still leave room to make everyone happy. There could, for example, be conflicts between the interest of the hosting organisation and the volunteer; who is the project to support, both?

Concert at Stanica
(Zilina, Slovakia).



It is also hard to have the objective to serve the network exclusively with some tasks and not exclusively with other. It would have been easier to define this as an exclusive project for the network and not to involve other stakeholders (but this was built into the financial construction). In conclusion the objectives are constructed from both a funding perspective and a “wanted” result perspective. This is quite common, but one should be aware of the position this puts the project in. Objectives could be divided into a priority list, as a means to overcome the hardship of satisfying different agendas.

2. STRUCTURE

As mentioned above, the financial structure made the project dependent on working within as well

as outside of the network. In the internal work, there was a clear and formal order of things, (well-structured work with the platform agreement etc). But outside of the network the project lacked a mandate and a specific agenda.

To achieve the goals of promoting exchange within the network, the structure was right, but to work more outside of the network was wrong. This led to a resource allocation problem, where much energy was put into an area where the return of the time invested depended more on other things beyond the control of the project.

I would also like to point out that even though the structure of the project was more adapted to work within the network, in the future even more could be done to increase the effect of invested time and energy. For example, the project could

have been a “European Project” in the full sense, where the scope is European and the mandate is European. To become this, the project must be supported by a European body and not a Swedish one, with restraints on where to invest and act. By this, *The Lift* could be responsible for supporting a certain amount of exchanges within the network as a financial as well as administrative coordinator, and not only be the supportive coordinator.

3. RESULTS

As mentioned in the beginning, the results of the project are, in general, very good. The project has delivered in almost every sense what it set out to do. However, the more qualitative aspects of the objectives (strengthen relations, youth networks, heighten European awareness, etc) could have been achieved to a larger extent with the development and alignment of the objectives and structure (organisation), e.g. if the project had been funded by an EU-body and only directed to the network organisations. Nevertheless, much has been achieved and both youth and cultural centres have learned much from each other. Above all, several meetings between different cultures have been realised thanks to the exchanges supported and coordinated by the project. In the voices from the project we can find several comments that signify an increased interest in EVS, a positive view on the exchanges within the network and reports of new contacts being established across borders.

4. STAKEHOLDERS' INTERESTS

As mentioned before, different stakeholders have been involved in the project and many of them have had different reasons for engaging in

Attracting new audiences at Pekarna magdalenske mreze
(Maribor, Slovenia).



Young people listening to EVS presentation at Mejeriet, Lund, Sweden.



the project. These reasons are seldom expressed; instead they tend to be a hidden agenda. When talking to the hosting and sending organisations it is obvious that different agendas lead to different views of the project. For some, the most important reason to engage in an exchange is to gain some new perspectives on their own cultural centre, while others stress the need for their young members to travel abroad, and others point out the need of human resources in the hosting organisation, and so on. In the future it is vital for similar projects to work with stakeholders in the formative period and gain a common purpose; above all it is important to limit the scope of the project.

5. BECOMING A VEHICLE OF PROMOTING ACTIVE CITIZENS OF THE EU

The Lift has been a vital part in promoting active citizens of the EU. In this sense, and maybe the most important sense, *The Lift* has been a very successful project. By promoting EVS both locally and internationally within the network, the project has given youth from different corners of Europe an opportunity to encounter new cultures, people and working environments. Even if this can be achieved outside of the project, both the voices and the material from the project point to the importance of a coordinating body to make the cultural centres and the young people visiting them gain more from the exchange. By building a framework for the exchanges within the network, youth and staff have been given the opportunity to learn, interact and exchange ideas of how to become an active citizen in the Europe of tomorrow. ■



This publication has been produced by the TEH Coordination Office. Text or photos may not be reproduced without permission. The Lift was a three-year project (2006-2008) funded by the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs. The EVS-exchanges in TEH are funded with support from the EU Programme Youth in Action. The work programme of TEH has been funded with the support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author; and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein. TEH has been awarded a multi-annual operational grant by the Nordic Council of Ministers for the project Trans Nordic Net.

