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This publication has been funded with support from the European Commission. This communication 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.

Frequently Asked Questions by volunteers of the European Voluntary Service

Leaving Early? Language
Pocket Money? mentor?

Working Hours?

Q

How much funds are we entitled to every month? We heard that our organization receives € 600 every month!

A

That's right! Indeed. An EVS Host Organization (HO) in Malta receives €600 per volunteer per month to support you in terms of:

- ⦿ Food
- ⦿ Linguistic support
- ⦿ Local transport
- ⦿ Any material needed for the implementation of the project
- ⦿ Accommodation
- ⦿ Personal support and mentoring
- ⦿ Protective clothing if the project needs these

Besides these, the Sending Organization (SO) also receives between 5% - 15% of the €600.

The HO can also allocate administrative costs, any material needed for the volunteers' work as well as funds for dissemination and exploitation of the project results, follow-up activities, and evaluation.

APART FROM THAT you are to receive €95 per month as "pocket money". This is for your leisure... to buy your favourite magazine, to go to the theatre, cinema, or just go out for a drink.



Q

What about local transport?

A

The organization is to support the volunteer with regards to public transport. However the obligation on behalf of the organization is to provide transport to and from the project. So if you live in Mosta and your project is in Valletta, then the organization has to reimburse you. It's up to the organization how to manage this – either by giving you a sum every month, or it may request that you present the tickets in order to reimburse you.

Although it is not an obligation, the NA recommends to organizations to give additional support for local transport just in case volunteers need to commute to go anywhere on the island.





I want to learn Maltese and English. Is it possible?
For how long can I go for lessons?

A EVS is not a language course even though the language training provided can be a formal language course. It is there for you to be able to communicate on the project and in the hosting country. Malta being a bi-lingual country, the NA allows organizations to choose to give volunteers tuition in either English or Maltese or both, depending on the needs of the project and the resources available for the organization. Volunteers who are already fluent in English (or coming from an English speaking country) are entitled to have training in the Maltese language.



There are no rules on the form of the language training provided, although as a NA we recommend language courses or private tuition, at least as a start and for volunteers who are very weak linguistically.

Some courses are provided by the Government sometimes in collaboration with Local Councils. They normally start in October. More information can be found at <http://www.eveningcourses.gov.mt/courses.asp> or at the Local Council of your town.

Again, there are no rules specifying a minimum number of language lessons to be provided or for how long. If you can communicate well, perhaps you might realise that you wouldn't need any more language training.

We also recommend tandem language learning as an addition to learning Maltese and/or English. Tandem language learning is a method of language learning based on mutual language exchange between tandem partners (ideally each learner is a native speaker in the language the proponent wants to learn). Your time on EVS can be an ideal one to do this since you meet many other volunteers from different countries.

It's good for you to know that time spent at language training offered by the organization is considered as part of the EVS working hours. This does not apply to tandem language learning unless organized by the organization ☺

Q

How does the insurance really work?

A Practically like any other medical insurance. If you come from an EU country, it's important that you have the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC). This will make things simpler when and if you need treatment.



For more details, you should consult the EVS Insurance FAQs which can be found on our website at http://www.yia.eupa.org.mt/member_files/File858.pdf.

Q

My mentor works for the organization... is this allowed?

A A mentor is there to support you personally, help you integrate in life in Malta and support your learning and YouthPass process. Although ideally the mentor is someone external to the organization, not all organizations have this luxury.



As a rule, the mentor cannot be someone directly supervising your work within the organization.

If that is the case, and especially if you don't have a mentor at all, please let us know!

Q

We do none of the tasks listed in the EVS project description...

A Now, that is indeed a problem. Have you discussed this with your mentor? If that doesn't work and talking to the coordinator of the project and sending organization doesn't help, then please contact us at your earliest before it is too late. We can try to help you find a solution.





But the food money our HO is giving us is not enough... what's the minimum?

A The EVS rules and guidelines do not stipulate a minimum amount of food money.

An organization can:

- Provide food for the volunteers: in this case it is possible that the volunteers do not receive food money at all. The NA does not recommend this, but there are situations when this is possible and when it is the only solution. E.g. If the project is in a residential setting (boarding house, home for the elderly, rehabilitation centre, etc) where all food is provided to residents and staff then the volunteers would not need to buy food as it is provided.
- Provide food while the volunteers are on the project and food money for when they are not on the project;
- Provide food money: Our NA recommends a minimum of €150. If you are receiving less, and the project is not providing any of the options above, let us know before you starve please!



You also have to understand that some organizations can afford to give more money for food than others. Some organizations are also smaller than others, or spend less on rent and can provide more food money. Sometimes organizations find it is necessary that because of distances to go and buy food, although not obliged, they provide more. E.g. if you need to take a bus to the nearest supermarket.

If you share an apartment with other volunteers, it is always recommended that you buy food together.

If you decide to go and eat at a high class restaurant, that has to come out of your €95 pocket money of course!

Remember, EVS is a learning experience not only while on your project but during your time in Malta in general. Learning how to manage your finances and how to live with others is part of the experience!

Q

I think we're working too much hours as volunteers...

A If you're working more than 38 hours including time spent during your language training, then yes you are working too much.

On the other hand, if you are working less than 30 hours, then you're working too little.

In both cases you should speak to your mentor and/or project coordinator. If that won't change anything, let us know so we can try and find a solution together with the organization.



Q

Can I leave the project earlier?

A In theory you can, in practice we say "better not". Of course things may happen or bigger opportunities may arise that leave you without a choice.

As a rule though, unless you are a young person with fewer opportunities (normally noted at application stage or in your activity agreement) your project has to last a minimum of 2 months.

It's always important to appreciate the fact that leaving earlier creates logistical and financial burdens on the HO.

Moreover, the HO is not always in a position to replace you, because it would have exhausted its travel budget for the project. On the other hand, the project will not receive the full funding because of the lost months for your early departure.

Above all, remember that you were selected for the project from other applicants, and by now you have become a valuable and important part of the organization.



Q

I found another project in Malta which I like more... can I change my project now?

A

The answer is “No”. The project hosting you is hosting you because you chose to be hosted in it.

On the other hand, there is nothing that will hold you from volunteering at the other organization in your free time, as long as this won't hinder your work in your project.



Q

Who should I contact in case there is problem or doubt?

A

First and foremost, talk to your mentor. If that won't work discuss the matter with the project coordinator. If nothing happens contact your Sending Organization and then the National Agency.

Asking questions and clearing the air when in doubt is very important. Avoid playing waiting games. A few small problems may become one big bubble which may explode when it shouldn't.



Q

I want my YouthPass... but how do I get it?

A

YouthPass is a tool to help you reflect on the learning process. During the On-Arrival Training organized by the NA you should be given an explanation of how it works and also be provided with the tools to do this.

The mentor is normally the person you will be able to reflect on the learning outcomes of your project and it is ideal if you do this regularly throughout the project rather than at one go at the end.

Youthpass

Q

Can I do a part-time, paid job while in Malta on EVS?

A Although we do not recommend it for various reasons, yes, volunteers can have a part-time, paid job while in Malta on EVS as long as the legal work permits are in place.

It is always best to contact the Employment & Training Corporation (www.etc.gov.mt) to see whether a work permit is necessary as this often depends on the migratory status of the volunteer and his/her nationality. Nevertheless it is of utmost importance to remember that you came to Malta to do your EVS, and you are to ensure that your part-time job does not interfere in any way with the EVS working hours. It's best to consult with your project coordinator and mentor before you make arrangements to start a part-time job.



Q

Are we entitled for days off?

A Of course. You are entitled for 2 days a month of leave.

We also recommend that volunteers are given 48 consecutive hours of free time every week. This means that if you work on a Saturday morning, then you won't have to go to work until Monday morning.

It is occasionally the case that some projects require that more work is done during certain days/months because of special activities and events organized by the organization. The organization, in that case is to give you time off for any extra hours worked instead.

In this, EVS is no different than a job. It is advisable that you speak to your project coordinator before taking your days off in order to avoid any misunderstandings.



Q

How many days of sick leave are we entitled for during our project?

A There are no specified minimum days of sick leave for EVS volunteers. While host organizations are to support volunteers also in terms of getting a doctor, they may ask the volunteer to provide a medical certificate.

Remember that you can claim costs incurred for visits to the doctor with the AXA Insurance.

So make sure that the doctor provides you with a receipt.



This document has been compiled from experiences shared by volunteers and organizations throughout the years during EVS Training Cycle activities

(On-Arrival Training and Mid-Term Evaluation Meetings) as well as other ad hoc situations

It's always a work in progress so we shall be updating this document whenever we deem necessary to add more FAQs to it.