Young people on the move: A study about young Europeans who participate in European Voluntary Service.

Unga människor i rörelse; En uppsats om unga Européer som deltar i Europeisk volontärtjänst.

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Abstract

The primary aim of this study is to investigate young people’s motives and expectations for participating in the action two “European Voluntary Service” (EVS) under the Youth In Action programme supported by the European Commission at the youth center Villa Elba in Finland. The study also aims to identify which competences the young people think they have developed through EVS. The study consists of one group interview and one focus group interview with ten EVS volunteers in total who accomplish short-term EVS and long term EVS during one month respectively nine months. The methodology is based upon a qualitative research approach and in order to reach a better understanding of the respondents’ motives for participating in EVS, the theories modernity, reflexive project of the self and the individualized society were chosen. The study is also based upon background information about EVS and earlier research. The results indicate that the EVS volunteers’ main motives for participating in EVS were: acquiring new skills, meet new people, and experience an adventure in another country. The most common competence developments turned out to be in the areas of language, social and initiative skills. Moreover, the study demonstrates that many young people in Europe face difficulties in getting into the labour market and becoming independent. The main reason is the economic recession which has severely affected the situation for young people in Europe and this is also confirmed by earlier research. Even though the respondents had positive opinions about their EVS project, criticism was raised towards the European Union’s ideas of creating a feeling of European Citizenship through programmes such as EVS.

Keywords: international volunteering, competence development, non-formal learning, European Voluntary Service
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Introduction

According to the United Nations Volunteer Programme (UNV) voluntary work can be defined as an activity which is carried out on an unpaid basis without any obligations by law, academic requirements or contracts. The activity should not be undertaken for financial rewards and the activity should be for the common good and directly or indirectly benefit other people (Hagh Talab, 2013).

International volunteering can be traced back to the colonial period, for example the Christian missionary in colonialized countries (Lewis, 2006). After the Second World War the formation of the United Nations and new development of NGOs and donors emerged which shaped the relations between richer and poorer countries and the increased freedom of movements between countries has contributed to possibility and development of international volunteering (ibid). During the last decades there has been a worldwide increased interest for international volunteering among young people (Andrew, 2011). Volunteering has progressively entered the private and public sector discourses in policies and demands for a corporate social responsibility, citizenship, social enterprise and international development. Thus, this has lead to a growth in international youth volunteering (ibid.).

Pantea (2012) argues that international volunteering may have a positive impact on young people’s transition to adulthood, through development of new skills and international volunteering can strengthen young people’s employability (ibid). Other identified impacts of international volunteering are increased international understanding and development of social capital (Andrew, 2011). However, criticisms against international volunteering have also been raised. It has been argued that voluntarism is a misuse of financial and labour forces that could be better used in other ways. Further, international volunteering has been criticised for reproducing the idea that communities in need cannot help themselves. However, international youth volunteering needs to be understood in the relation to the globalisation process. There is an increased need of “global workers” who have a wide range of knowledge and skills necessary for the transnational labour market (ibid.).

Moreover, during the last decade there has been a shift of viewpoint of the patterns and motives for volunteering (Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003). Researchers point out transitions from “traditional” to “modern” patterns and motives for volunteering. Traditional volunteering is described as collectivistic and membership based. Modern volunteering is described as based on personal interests, is temporary and is a search for self-realization and self-discovery (ibid.). Further, Rothwell (2012) argues that international volunteering can be motivated by experiencing a learning process through exploring something “different”.

International youth mobility and volunteering is an important policy and strategy for the European Union (EU) (European Commission, 2013). In 2006 the European parliament and the European council established the Youth in Action (YiA) programme for the period 2007-2013. The YiA programme was created for young people aged 13-30 and aims to generate a sense of European citizenship, tolerance and solidarity among young people in Europe and
involve them in the building of the present and future Europe. The YiA programme promotes youth mobility within and outside of the EU, intercultural learning and non-formal learning. European Voluntary Service (EVS) is a so-called action within the larger organizational structure of the EU’s YiA programme. EVS gives young people aged 18 to 30 the chance to go abroad and engage in full time voluntary work within or outside the EU for two weeks up to 12 months. Through this opportunity, the European Union wants to promote the principles of solidarity, European citizenship and strengthen social cohesion in the EU (ibid.). From the EU’s point of view, the YiA programme aims to develop certain key competences for lifelong learning among young people (European Commission, 2007). Lifelong learning refers to the continuous acquisition of knowledge, skills and understandings that individuals need to adapt to due to the rapid changes in the society, and an ongoing learning process throughout life is necessary (Zhao & Biesta, 2012). Although the EVS has existed for some time, there is a lack of research about the motives and reasons young people have for volunteering in this kind of programme.

**Aim and research questions**

The aim of this study is to investigate young people’s motives and expectations for participating in one international volunteer project through EVS located at the youth centre Villa Elba in Finland and to identify which competences the young people think they have developed through EVS.

Research questions:

- What motives and expectations do EVS volunteers identify for participating in EVS?

- Which competences development do the EVS volunteers identify as important?

- How do young Europeans participating in EVS describe the situation for young people in Europe?

The following section hereby continues with a description of the YiA Programme with focus on EVS in order to create and understanding of the structure of YiA and EVS. This is followed by a literature overview, theoretical perspectives, methodology and thereafter results and analysis and finally a discussion are presented.

**Background information**

In 2006, the European Parliament and the council established the Youth in Action Programme (YiA) for the period 2007-2013 by the decisionN° 1719/2006/EC (European Commission, 2013). The YiA has been developed by diverse stakeholders and specialists in the youth field. The participating countries are EU Member States and Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Turkey, and EU neighboring countries (Eastern Europe and Caucasus, the Mediterranean region, South-East Europe). Other countries in the world can be partners but not applicants for YiA funding (ibid.).
The YiA programme aims to realize the following objectives:

- *Promote young people’s active citizenship in general and their European citizenship in particular*
- *Develop solidarity and promote tolerance among young people, in particular in order to foster social cohesion in the European Union*
- *Foster mutual understanding between young people in different countries*
- *Contribute to developing the quality of support systems for youth activities and the capabilities of civil society organizations in the youth field*
- *Promote European cooperation in the youth field*

(European Commission, 2013, p. 4).

Moreover, the YiA programme is structured in five so-called Actions, and this study will focus on Action Two—European Voluntary Service (EVS) which gives young people aged 18 to 30 the chance to commit voluntary work abroad (European Commission, 2013).

**European Voluntary Service (EVS)**

EVS volunteers engage in full time unpaid voluntary work within or outside the EU for two weeks up to 12 months (European Commission, 2013). The voluntary work an EVS volunteer can participate in spans a range of areas such as sports, youth work, social care, environment and art. The volunteers are expected to work for 30-35 hours a week. Through this opportunity, the European Union wants to promote solidarity, tolerance and strengthen social cohesion in the EU (ibid.).

There are four actors in an EVS project; 1) a coordinating organization, 2) a sending institution, 3) a hosting organization and 4), a volunteer (European Commission, 2013). The coordinating organization takes the role as the applicant organization and applies for funding from the YiA programme, and holds the financial responsibility during the whole project. The coordinating organization can be the sending or hosting organization, or another organization. The sending organization recruits and sends the volunteer and the hosting organization hosts the volunteer. Further, the project covers 90 % of the travel costs and costs for accommodation, food, pocket money and insurance (ibid.).

An EVS project can involve one to 30 volunteers who can do their service individually or in groups (European Commission, 2013). The second component is on-going volunteer support. Each volunteer has the right to receive personal and task related support. In addition, the volunteer is offered language course training and a personal mentor as well. The third component is EVS training and evaluation cycle; the national agencies arrange on-arrival training for the volunteer in the beginning of their EVS where they learn more about the hosting countries culture and what to expect from EVS. The national agencies also arrange mid-term evaluation for EVS projects longer than six months. Moreover, EVS has certain quality standards and core values. In order to sustain these, organizations who wish to send or
host volunteers need to be accredited by the national agency; they need to send in an expression of interest to the national agency in their country (ibid.).

**Youthpass as recognition of non-formal learning**

In 2007, The European council and the governments of the member states decided to implement Youthpass as recognition of non-formal learning in the YiA programme. (http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/education_training_youth/lifelong_learning/c11096_en.htm). Youthpass is a certificate and includes three different parts. For EVS projects, the first page includes confirmation of participation, personal details of the participant, the project period and general information about EVS. The second page consists of description of the particular EVS project, tasks and role of the volunteer. The last page consists of an individualized description of the learning outcomes which should be written by the EVS volunteer (ibid.).

Youthpass aims to bring out the learning dimensions acquired by the volunteer during the project and can help the volunteer to assess their learning outcomes. (Hagh Talab, 2013). The Youthpass can also add value for the volunteer, for example in applying for a job (ibid.). The reflection should be developed in a mutual process between the participant and the learning supporter, in an EVS project it is usually the mentor (Salto-Youth training and cooperation, 2011). The Youthpass process should be a continuously reflection during the project period. The volunteer needs to plan and assess his/her own learning cycle and at the end of the project the learning outcomes are described in the Youthpass. The volunteer has the right to be informed and to be given support in the Youthpass process; however, the decision of taking part in the Youthpass process is voluntary (ibid.).

**Organization overview of Villa Elba**

Villa Elba is a National Youth Centre located by the seaside four km outside the city center of Kokkola in western Finland. Villa Elba is supported and observed by the Finnish Ministry of Education and is one of Finland’s ten national youth centers. Villa Elba consists of different departments including; social youth work, nature school and international department. In the international department the staff works with international camps and programs, practical training and voluntary work for young people, information and guidance about international programmes, host EVS volunteers and coordinate EVS projects in nearby municipalities. Villa Elba cooperates with local youth clubs and centers, the unemployment agency, and outreach youth workers to get in contact with young people and offer their services. They also inform and support municipalities about the possibility to host volunteers and can bare the role as coordinating organization for EVS project.

Villa Elba has a wide international network with other organizations that engage in EVS. Through this network, Villa Elba recruits EVS volunteers to their hosting and coordinating projects. In international work villa Elba’s main aim is to offer youngsters the possibilities of learning in a multicultural environment and finding their own strengths and abilities through international activities. Villa Elba hosted their first EVS volunteers in 1996 and has been hosting, sending and coordinates approximately 200 volunteers during the years. Every year
Villa Elba coordinate and host around twenty EVS volunteers in Villa Elba and in nearby municipalities (H. Lehto, personal communication, 22 March 2013).

Youth center Villa Elba

**Literature review**

**Volunteering and non-formal learning**

Non-formal learning is a cornerstone in YiA projects (European Commission, 2013). Recognition of learning achieved outside the formal education system has greatly increased since the early 1990s. This has entered policy agendas in the European Union and in other non-European Union countries as well (ibid.). Perulli (2009) describes formal learning as learning taking place in educational or training institutions, and leads to qualifications and certificates. Informal learning takes place in everyday life; this learning is not planned and structured and may not be recognized by the learner (ibid.). Garrido (1992) defines non-formal learning as organized learning activities which take place outside the formal education with activities aimed to meet learning needs and certain objectives and the target group can be persons from all ages. Non-formal learning usually takes place during leisure time and the learners participate on a voluntary basis (ibid.) Example of non-formal learning settings can be sports clubs, workshops and training courses (Hagh Talab, 2013).

**Eight key competences and lifelong learning**

Youthpass is designed to assess certain key competences adapted by the European Commission in 2006 (Salto-Youth training and cooperation, 2011). The volunteer’s reflection and learning outcomes should be matched with the key competences in the Youthpass certificate. The competences are a part of EU’s strategy of lifelong learning, and are according to EU essential for personal development, employability and active citizenship. The competences are; digital competence, social and civic competence, learning to learn, mathematical and basic competence in science and technology, cultural expressions, sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, communication foreign language and communication in the mother tongue (ibid.). The concept of lifelong learning includes learning in different stages of life, and various modes of ways of learning (Hagh Talab, 2013). Traditionally, formal education has been seen as the only legitimate form of learning. Although today, formal
education is now seen as one channel of learning among many learning opportunities. Learning can be seen as a process that occurs through life in various context within and outside the formal education system (ibid.).

Dehmel (2006) states that lifelong learning has emerged as a key element in the EU’s education and training policies since the 1990s. The rise of information technology, rapid social and economical changes, globalization and an ageing population are some key elements that have affected the worldwide interest in lifelong learning. Lifelong learning was highlighted in 1994 in the European Commission’s White Paper Growth, Competitiveness and Employment, which presents lifelong learning as the 'strategic idea' (CEDEFOP, 2003, p. 1, referred in Dehmel, 2006) that should be used to meet the new economic and social obstacles. Further, from a critical point of view, EU’s lifelong learning strategy, which includes learning on a social and personal level, stresses the responsibility of individuals to update and develop competences to maintain employability (Dehmel, 2006). This point of view is supported by Hinchliffe (2006) who states that the lifelong learning strategy has a political and economical motive, to position people in an uncertain labour market and to shift focus to the individual’s sense of initiative and duty of him/her performances. Hence, the lifelong learning strategy demands self-directed learning and self-fulfillment from individuals (ibid.).

Changes of patterns and motives of volunteering
All over Europe, volunteering is seen as a strong resource for service provision, active engagement in civic society and community integration (Hilger, 2005). During the last decade, there has been a transition of viewpoint of the nature of volunteerism from traditional, collectivistic, institutionalized to modern, individualistic and self-organized (Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003). Traditional volunteering was based on a sense of obligation to contribute to the community. Modern volunteering tends to be more temporary and sporadic. Moreover, modern volunteering seems to be more based on the personal interests of the volunteer and of a search for self-realization (ibid.). Modern volunteering is more need-based from the volunteer’s perspective and is also motivated by self-improvement and acquiring of skills which can be useful on the labour market (Pantea, 2013). In North America a changed pattern from charity model to the enterprise/reflexive model has been identified. The new model has been developed through the enlarged social process of reflexive modernization (ibid.).

Hilger (2005) points out that reflexive volunteering is characterized by an increased recognition of self-centered motives and an increased connection of volunteering and identity, and the importance of volunteering as a key factor in the volunteer’s biographical life-course. Additionally this new pattern of volunteerism comes at a time where the importance of civic society is underlined as never before. Governments of today has recognized volunteerism in civic society out of ideological and political reasons such as cutting back welfare service and laying this responsibility on voluntary organizations (ibid.). Young people volunteering in a developing country tend to seek an adventure, explore the world, other cultures, improve language skills and experience something different (Mangold, 2012). In addition, they often want to do something good for other people and help. The helping aspect of international volunteering has faced criticism in the field of development aid. This is associated with a structural position of power over less privileged people. Moreover, volunteering can be
described as “service-learning” for the volunteer; “learning” refers to the actual activity the volunteer engage in primarily for their own benefit and “service” refers to helping others (ibid.).

Transition from adolescence to adulthood in Europe
During the last 50 years a demographic change has taken place in industrialized countries across the world (Jensen Arnett, 2007). The median age of first marriage and children has risen from the early 20s to the late 20s and early 30s. For many young people, this transition period is the age of exploring identity, education and job seeking (ibid.). This transition has been extended for many young people though, especially in the aftermath of the economic crisis in 2008, young people in Europe are significantly affected (Reeskens & van Oorschot, 2012).

According to the European Commission’s report EU Youth Rapport Status of the situation of young people in the European Union (2012), over 20 % of the young people under 25 were unemployed in EU during 2011 and in Spain and Greece the percentage was over 50 %, although young people in Europe are more educated than ever before. However, the risk of unemployment has increased among this group as well. Vulnerable groups such as immigrants, young people with mental health problems and disabilities face even more challenges in the labour market. Insecure employment contracts can affect the ability to finance a household. The average age of leaving the parental household varies in Europe; young people in northern and Western Europe move from the parental household earlier than young people in the south and eastern part of Europe. The average age in Europe to move away from parents is 25 for women and 27.5 for men. Moreover, the unemployment and poverty rates are higher in south of Europe compared to the northern part (ibid.).

Russell and O’Connell (2001) highlight that employment is a fundamental part of growing up and being independent and young people are generally at a higher risk of unemployment since many of the young people’s first jobs are unstable and of short period. The high unemployment among young people in Europe is extending the transition from adolescence to adulthood, and increasing the risk of social exclusion among young people (ibid.). Pichler (2006) points out that employment is a key element in life and is an important source for social participation, financial independence and identity. Thus, young people face difficulties to find employment, become independent and plan their life (ibid.). Further, socio-economic changes and difficulties in labour market place increasingly demands on young peoples capacity of own initiative and the ability of navigating among possible choices and options (Evans, Schoon & Weale, 2013). Hence, young people are expected to actively shape their own destiny (ibid.).

Theoretical approach
This chapter presents the theoretical approach informing the results and analysis chapter. The theories are from a sociological perspective, and the chosen theoretical approaches are modernity, reflexivity and the individualised society. These theories can from a holistic point
of view, create an understanding of the rapid changes in the society that has taken place during the last 200 years. Further, the theories have been chosen in order to explain the increased responsibility on the individual person when it comes to creating an identity.

**Modernity**

According to Giddens (1990) the term modernity addresses the revolutionary changes in organisation and social life in Europe from the seventeenth century onwards. New patterns such as industrialism, capitalism and development of nation states are key element in the modernity era (Giddens, 1999). Moreover, modernism is explained as a dynamic process with rapid social changes faster than ever before which influences social behaviour and patterns. (ibid.). The present modern era is explained as the “information society” or the “consumer society” (Giddens, 1990). We are moving from a system based on manufacturing of material goods to one more centred on information (ibid.).

**The individualised society**

The idea of the changing role of humans into individuals in the modern society is supported by Bauman (2002). He argues that individualism is a destiny and not a choice. The author gives examples of changing mentality of individual’s own responsibilities; if individuals become ill the reason is the individuals’ lack of a healthy lifestyle. If individuals get unemployed, they have either not made enough effort in applying for jobs or have not developed their competences for being successfully on a job interview. If individuals are unsure about their future carrier opportunities or are worried for the future, it is because they have not learnt how to impress other people, and this is something they should have learned.

Risks and ambiguity are still created socially, although the responsibility to handle it has been individualised. Criticism has been raised of individual’s selfish behaviours and the tendency to dissect life into shorts episodes. However, this can be seen as a rational reaction in a world where individuals’ needs relate to the future as a threat instead of something secure. Consequently, the future is unpredictable and this demands flexibility among individuals, and this makes long-time planning difficult. Individualism stands for the transformation of the human identity from something given, to a task and lays responsibility of life navigation on the individual.

**The “reflexive project of self-identity”**

Beck (1994, in Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003) argues that the concept of reflexivity is a key factor in the current late-modern era. Self-reflexivity stands for a shift from collective monitoring agents to active, autonomous and self-monitoring of individual life. Further, self-reflexivity is usually connected to individualism and the increased freedom of choice, which one hand can offer individuals the opportunity to shape their own destinies but on the other hand can lead to feelings of uncertainly and risks (Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003). Giddens (1999) highlights that important transitions in life always have demanded psychological reorganization, however in previous times before modernity, life patterns were reproduced through generations in a collectivistic structure. For instance the expected identity transition from adolescence to adulthood was clear. In the present late-modernity era, the changing self must be explored and constructed in a reflexive process where social and personal change
needs to be connected. Self-identity can be explained as something that is constant-ly shaped through individuals’ reflexive actions. Giddens (1990, p. 124) states that “an individual must find her or his identity amid the strategies and options provided by abstract systems”.

The self is a reflexive project for which individuals are responsible; we are whom we make ourselves to be (Giddens, 1999). Self-fulfilment is perceived as a balance between opportunities and risks. Further, modernity is confronting individuals with a diversity of choices, and lifestyle is a choice rather than an inherited pattern from previous generations. Who should I be? What should I do? How should I act? These are questions we all have to ask ourselves in the modern era. Life becomes a project that demands life planning and we need to actively and reflexively engage and create our identity. Hence, the project of the self can lead to a feeling of precariousness and ambiguity (ibid.). Another important aspect of the reflexive project of the self is globalisation which can be explained as the intensification of social relations worldwide which link nations and people together, and the development of global social relations (Giddens, 1990). Technologies, internet, media and communication have affected the globalisation, and people receive information and news from all over the world (ibid).

People who engage in voluntary activities on a national or international level engage for various reasons but identified motives include: contributing to the society, helping other people and gaining new skills. At the same time, the increased interest for international volunteering is connected to the changing world where there is an increased pressure to stand out as individuals.

**Methodology**

This study is based on a qualitative methodology to explore the views of young volunteers at Villa Elba (Bryman, 2008). Methods of data collection included a group-interview with two long term EVS volunteers and a focus group interview with seven short-term EVS volunteers. These methods are described in more detailed below.

Qualitative research intends to explore the world in order to describe, understand and, in some cases, explain social phenomena (Kvale, 2007). This can proceed in different ways, for instance by analyzing experiences of individuals or groups, observing interactions and communication between individuals or groups, and analyzing documents which describe experiences and interactions. A key point in qualitative research is to investigate and analyze how individuals construct the world around them, what is happening around them and what is seemed as meaningful for them (ibid.).

**Sampling**

I have had good contact with the Youth Center Villa Elba in Finland for many years through my involvement in international youth projects, and I carried out field-based studies at Villa Elba during the autumn semester 2012. I contacted the coordinator of international affairs at Youth Center Villa Elba in the beginning of March 2013, and asked if I could visit them for a couple of days in March for interviews with the volunteers. The coordinator confirmed immediately and agreed and explained that they hosted two long-term volunteers and 14
short-term volunteers at the moment. One week later, I sent an e-mail with an attached informed consent letter to the EVS coordinator; the letter included a brief presentation of the study and the purpose of it. Moreover, the letter included information about the structure of the interviews and the focus group interview. The letter stated that the participation was voluntary and anyone had the right to withdraw their participation at any time without any motivation. Further it was stated that personal information would be kept in confidentiality, and that participation was anonymous. The interviews were only going to be used for this study and all the material will be kept in a locked drawer. In the end of the letter, my e-mail and phone number were written.

Later on, the EVS coordinator of Villa Elba informed that the two long-term volunteers had shown interest for participating in the study, and several of the 14 short-term volunteers had agreed as well and I hoped to gather approximately six to eight of the short-term volunteers for the focus group interview. When I arrive to Villa Elba I informed the short term-volunteers about the study, and seven of them agreed to participate in the study. They had been in Villa Elba during three weeks and had one more week to go. I spoke to the long-term EVS volunteers and they agreed to participate in the study. They had spent seven months as EVS volunteers at Villa Elba and had four respective five months left of their EVS project.

I have used purposive sampling, the research participants have not been selected randomly, and I contacted Villa Elba, which I knew have long experience with EVS projects. The aim of purposive method is to sample participants in a strategic way so they are relevant to the research questions (Bryman, 2008). In this method, organizations, sites and people are selected on the basis of their relevance to the research questions. Snowball method is a purposive method where the researcher tries to contact with a small group of people who are relevant to the research questions, and then ask these people to get in contact with people who may be possible respondent (ibid.). Since I knew the staff from Villa Elba personally, I knew that Villa Elba could be a proper platform for my research. Because of this I could use purposive samples and eventually snowball samples. They helped me to get in contact with the volunteers who could be possible research participants.

**Focus group interview**

I knew that I would spend four days in Villa Elba and in order to be time effective, and at the same time study the interaction in the group, I chose group interviews as interview methods. A focus group is a form of group interview with usually at least four interview participants (Bryman, 2008). The questions are concerning a specific theme, and emphasis is on the interaction between the group members. Focus group methods concentrate on how participants as group members discuss a certain theme, and a cornerstone is analysis of the shared construction of sense and meaning. The participants are often questioning each other’s opinions and argue between each other. Therefore, the researcher may get more realistic description of what the participants think, since they reflect on their opinions and maybe even change opinion´s (ibid.).
**Group interview**

Group interview is a method with several interview participants who discuss various topics (Bryman, 2008). Moreover, group interview with several group members are often carried out in order to save time and money. Compared to focus group interview, there is less focus on the elements of interaction within the interview participants (ibid.). I used the group interview method with the two long-term volunteers. The main purpose of using group interview with the two long-term volunteers was to save time. Nonetheless I also wanted to stimulate discussions between them.

**Semi-structured interviews**

I used a semi-structured interview guide during the two interviews. Bryman (2008) state that semi-structured interviews include different topics or questions to be covered and the participants have a great deal of flexibility in their reply. Further, the questions may not be in the exact order as on the interview guide and the interviewer follows up on statements said by the participants (ibid.). I followed an interview guide (see attachment 1) with open and broad questions around different themes, as a means to stimulate the discussion among the group members. The themes where; background, situation of young people in Europe, preparation, expectations, EVS project, support, personal development, eight key competences, European citizenship, intercultural learning and future. As the interviews proceeded, the participants raised additional issues to the questions, and they discussed and compared between themselves and their countries. I had similar interview questions for the group interview and the focus group interview.

In the focus group interview I was less intrusive in the discussions, and let them discuss openly the question that I realized was important for them. In addition, I observed the interaction in the group more. The focus group interview was one hour and 40 minutes and the group interview was one hour and 20 minutes. Both the interviews were recorded with a dictaphone and thereafter transcribed for analysis.

**Analysis process**

I started to read through the transcriptions, to get a sense of the material. Eventually, I started the coding process with the first step, open coding. I marked words and sentences which represented something meaningful for the respondents. I gave these marked words and sentence a topic, and these topics were given a code. In this stage, the codes should be as concrete and close to the original data as possible (Fejes & Forslund Frykedal, 2009). The reason is to avoid a too abstract analysis in an early stage. The codes are thereafter put together in categories (ibid.). Next, I continued with the second step, axial coding. In this process data is put back together in new ways after open coding them (Walker & Myrick, 1996). Thereafter, connections are investigated between the categories and subcategories. The purpose is to outline relationships between the categories and subcategories (ibid.). Furthermore, in the selective coding stage I developed a core category. A core category consists of a topic which describes the central issue of the data and which relates to all categories (Fejes & Forslund Frykedal, 2009). During the analysis process, the core category has been further developed constantly. In the last step of the analysis, I conceptualized how the developed categories related to each other and I identified overarching themes.
Methodical reflection

Bryman (2008) highlights that qualitative research method has been criticized for being too subjective; the research findings can be affected by the researcher’s point of view of what is relevant and important. Further, qualitative research is criticized for being difficult to replicate, due to the fact that what is decided as important data for the research is very much up to the researcher’s predilections. In addition, qualitative research is criticized for being impossible to generalize to a larger population (ibid.). In contrast to the criticism towards qualitative research, Kvale (2007) highlights the strong aspects of qualitative research. He points out that qualitative research gives an opportunity to explore how people experience and understand their world. It gives a deeper understanding of the interview respondents since they describe their opinions and realities with their own words. Further, qualitative research is a powerful method of generating knowledge of how people see the world they live in (ibid).

Nevertheless, I have to analyze my role in the research process. I do not think that I can be totally objective in the research process. I have long experience of working with the YiA programme, including EVS. Because of this I may have brought a certain bias into the research study. However, my knowledge and experience may at the same time potentially strengthen the research since I brought knowledge and understanding about the topic. However, at the same time I tried to be neutral in the analyzing process and I tried to be open to diverse social realities, and to analyze these. In addition, Youth Center Villa Elba is one youth center among many organizations and public bodies who take part in EVS projects in Europe. Therefore, the samplings are not representative for all organizers of EVS projects.

Ethical considerations

Research is a necessary contribution to the development of people and society (Vetenskapsrådet, 2002). Therefore, society has certain demands one the research carried out. Participants in research should be protected from psychological or physical harm, humiliation and violation, and this is the main concern for ethical considerations. There are four main ethical principles. The first is informed consent; the researcher must inform the concerned research participants about the main purpose of the study. Research participants then have the right to decide themselves about their participation. The researcher has to collect the research participant’s approval orally and/or written. Further, information about the research participants should be given the highest amount of confidentiality as possible. The personal information must be stored in a way that unauthorized people cannot reach this information. Finally, information about research participant may only be used in the specific research study (ibid.).

The informed consent letter (see attachment 2) was given out to the long-term and the short-term EVS volunteers at Villa Elba one week before I arrived to Finland. For this reason, the possible research participants had the time to consider their participation. I wanted the possible participants to have time to consider their participation before I arrived. When I arrived at Villa Elba, I presented myself and I informed the volunteers that those who wanted to participate could come to a meeting room at a certain time. Before we started the interviews, I explained the informed consent letter orally. I tried to give the participants as much information as possible and answered their questions, so they could make a decision.
about whether they wished to participate in the study or not. All of them agreed and signed the consent form.

The two interviews were carried out in groups of seven and in a pair of two persons. I have considered this method from an ethical point of view. By using these methods, the participant’s personal information was spread among more people. In addition, the participants could have felt insecure in answering the questions because of the other participants. I did not consider the interview questions to be highly sensitive, although what is seen as sensitive questions can vary from person to person. Nonetheless, the participants came from different countries in Europe and neighboring countries to Europe and the view of sensitive questions can vary in different cultures. Language barriers are also an aspect I had to analyze from an ethical perspective. A couple of the participants had low skills in English and may not have understood all the aspects of participating in the study. Additionally, in order to avoid identification of the participants, I have not used names and I have removed information about country of origin in order to keep the respondents as anonymous as possible.

**Results and analysis**

In order to create an understanding for the empiric results, the analysis of the results will be presented in connection to earlier research and the theoretical perspectives. The results from the interviews are structured around the following themes: 1) An extended transition from adolescence to adulthood, 2) a quest for something new, 3) personal development, 4) sense of belonging and 5) the meaning of European citizenship.

**An extended transition from adolescence to adulthood**

A significant majority of the interviewed volunteers expressed a major concern over the situation for young people in Europe. The lack of job opportunities and the difficulties in the labour market were major concerns among all volunteers. Particularly the economic crisis was underlined to be the cause of the severe situation for young people. Moreover, housing problems were addressed as well the short-term volunteers highlighted that apartments are too expensive to rent or buy. Student apartments were available but after graduation it is difficult to find an apartment and to afford to pay the rent. The short-term volunteers added that migration for job seeking in another country is essential. However, one of the volunteers expressed that young people are afraid of that too, because the situation is similar for young people all over Europe. One of the short-term expressed this as follows:

“In my country we have a similar situation because job opportunities in my country...there is none, because of the economic crisis.”

Another volunteer added that too many students graduate from the university, and there is therefore a high competition for the few jobs available. This confirms the statistics presented by the European Commissions rapport *EU Youth Rapport, Status of the situation of young people in the European Union* (2012) which indicates increased unemployment rates among young people in Europe. Most of the respondents in the interviews were from south and eastern parts of Europe, and only one was from the northern part and one was from an EU-candidate country. The volunteer from the northern part of Europe did not express a major
concern of young people’s situation. These points out different opportunities for young people in different parts of Europe which is also confirmed by the European Commission (2012).

In relation to Giddens (1999) thoughts of the modern society, the volunteers described the situation for young people in Europe which significantly includes uncertainty. Safe workplaces and housing opportunities are worrying elements for young people according to the volunteers and life is not as predictable as in previous generations. The economic crisis in Europe was highlighted among the volunteers, and in connection to the economic crisis Giddens (modernity and self identity, 1991, p-184-185) states that;

“Modernity is inherently prone to crisis, on many levels. A “crisis” exists whenever activities concerned with important goals in the life of an individual or a collectively suddenly appear inadequate...A person may read of recurrent political crisis for example, and perhaps be scornful about the ability of political leaders to contain them. But many such crises directly affect that persons own activities and capabilities, as when they lead to economic troubles, high unemployment and difficulties in housing markets. The crisis-prone nature of late modernity thus has unsettling consequences on two respects: it fuels a general climate of uncertainty which an individual finds disturbing no matter how far he seeks to put it to the back of his mind; and it inevitably exposes everyone to a diversity of crisis situations of greater or lesser importance, crisis situations which may sometimes the very core of self-identity.”

Moreover, in contrast to the rest of the volunteers one volunteer argued that the young people in Europe are irresponsible. The volunteer stated that:

“Volunteer 1 represents the opinion of 80% of the young people in Europe I think that people are complaining and nobody says that it is their own fault...everybody remembers the good old times but nobody is doing nothing for now just complaining and being lazy and getting drunk...so my opinion is that it is their own fault, the young people.”

The volunteer stressed that young people in Europe are lazy and that they have a careless attitude towards their future and just blame the government for lack of support. The source of this was the poor education system, absent parents, and the uncaring attitude among young people. This viewpoint describes an increased responsibility placed on young people for their future and very well describes the concept of individualization that Bauman (2002) points out. In contrast to the other volunteers, this particular volunteer laid the responsibility of being flexible and productive on the individual. Therefore, individuals are processed into individualism and need to actively plan for the future, relationships, employment and education (Schwartz, Côté & Jensen Arnett, 2005). According to Bauman (2002) flexibility is the new slogan on the labour market. Workers of today are expected to change jobs several times during the working life. This is actually happening, on one hand because of the increase in short term jobs and poor or no working contracts. On the other hand, in order to stand out as individual there is an expectation to try out new jobs for self-development. The laziness the long-term volunteer argue about may actually reflect a feeling of not fitting into the norm of a constant push or demand for self-development together with a disappointment over a lack of opportunities.
A quest for something new

The volunteers got the information about the possibility of EVS volunteering from teachers, fellow students, friends, social media and information sessions given through the municipalities. One volunteer mentioned that; “It’s something young people speak about”. The mentioned motives and expectations were learning new languages and improve English in particular, meet new people and get new friends, being in a multicultural environment and learning new skills. To travel abroad, for some for the first time was seen as a desire for adventure. One volunteer expressed a wish for trying out an independent lifestyle and feeling autonomous. Two of the volunteers felt that the particular themes children and environment of the EVS project was interesting for them and motivated them to participate. One volunteer explained:

“I believe that...if not for all of them...one of the main reasons for the EVS is that they do not have serious plans. They want to know what to do.”

It’s notable that none of the volunteers expressed “traditional” volunteering motives that include motives of helping other and contributing to the community (Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003). Young people may address motives that include the acquisition of skills (Pantea, 2013). This was the case among these volunteers. Nevertheless, this may not mean their motives and interests are of a less moral value. Pantea (p.49, 2013) states that volunteers are people of their time, with their own needs and aspirations. Further, the author underlines that activities such as volunteering must be a source for private benefits (ibid.). The volunteer’s motives exemplify what Giddens (1999) describes as a reflexive project. EVS can be an instrument that young people can add to their biographical life course, and something they can have use for in the future. Due to the self-responsibility of life planning and creating an identity (Giddens, 1999), EVS can be seen as a choice for adding value to the self-biography.

Personal development

New skills and social development were stressed among nearly all the volunteers. Meeting new people from other countries and being in a totally different environment and context were key elements. One of the long-term volunteers pointed out that he is more open now, and can handle different kinds of people. Several social skills where highlighted as well, such as practicing conflict resolution, to be patient and to be responsible for household tasks. To be independent and have a daily routine and have responsibility during the voluntary work was also underlined. Some of the volunteers reflected on the EVS projects impact on their self-reliance and ability to manage by themselves. The volunteers claimed that they learned
more about themselves as persons, how they reacted in new environments and to new people from different countries. Further, in connection with the eight key competences of lifelong learning set up by the European Commission, the volunteers reflected on which competences they think they have developed most during their project. The short-term volunteers referred to “communication in foreign language” since they all developed their English and some learned German as well. “Digital competence” was also pointed out since some of them where working with computers and cameras for making presentations. Particularly “social and civic competence” was addressed, and the experience of living and working together in multicultural groups in a foreign country had been the major reason for that development. One volunteer described that she had development more social skills and to develop these skills was an aim she had set up for herself. She now felt that she had accomplished a mission she had set up for herself before the project. “Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship” were also underlined; the volunteers said that they have been practicing project management and had been given responsibility for several activities with children and young people at Villa Elba.

The long-term volunteers stated almost the same competences as the short-term volunteers. They mentioned: “social and civic competence”, “communication in foreign language”, “sense of initiative and entrepreneurship” and “learning to learn”. They argued that the development in English and some Finnish was the clearest development and the social development as well. The volunteers stressed that the developed skills were something they can have use of in the future. The experience could also open up to new opportunities and ideas for the future. One short-term volunteer explained:

“I also opened my mind for other cultures, to travel, projects, work…in my country I don’t work and for looking for work in another country, this project is good for me.”

For some of the volunteers it was the first time abroad, and to live in a completely different environment and with people with different backgrounds added to the intercultural competence, said the volunteers. The volunteers said that they learned more about the Finnish culture and realized cultural differences in customs, food, body language and mentality. Nevertheless, the long-term volunteers reflected that the biggest cultural chock would probably happen when they arrive home. One of the long-term volunteers expressed:

“I came prepared as much as possible. I really read and I had my personal…research and I knew that Finnish people are really closed, so I wasn’t surprised when I like staying in 15 minutes with someone and we don’t speak with each other we just stay…I believe that if it will be such a thing as cultural shock it will be when I go back home because I got use to this.”

The multicultural environment is an important condition for the intercultural learning process (Jafari & Goulding 2013). The authors points out that when individuals are confronted with other cultures, they compare themselves with the other people, and self-reflect over questions such as “Who am I? Who are they? What do I have, and what do they have?” This new experience puts their identity in focus and it is compared towards how they have been defined in their own culture. Through this process, how they observe their identity and culture may differ from how their society and parents define it (ibid.)
The voluntary work they had committed to was seen as something valuable for the short-term volunteer’s future and this can, in turn, add value for the reflexive project of self-identity (Giddens, 1999). Volunteering can be understood as an investment in the identity and for future job opportunities. For example, one volunteer said:

“If you do some voluntary work you can get experience and later find a job more easily...people who employ if they see in CV that you have been volunteering that means a lot.”

This quote confirms the aim of developing certain key competences from European Commissions point of view (Salto-Youth training and cooperation, 2011). The development of certain “key competences” is a part of EU’s strategy of lifelong learning. From one point of view, lifelong learning can be seen as a tool to empower self-development, through becoming an experienced and self-directed learner (Hinchliffe, 2006) In the EVS projects the self-assessment through the Youthpass stands for this. On the other hand the author argues that “lifelong learning turns out to be an extra layer in the commodification of labour....individuals is now being asked to manage their own skill portfolios. Only then will they have any chance of competing with other labour-commodities. Thus what starts off as an emancipatory ideal is transformed into a weapon of market discipline “ (Hinchliffe, 2006, p. 96).

**Sense of belonging**

Both the short-term and the long term-EVS volunteers underline the social aspect of the EVS project as a positive key factor. The short-term EVS stayed in cottages at Villa Elba’s compound and they worked in five different teams. One group volunteered in an animal shelter, another group in a horse stable, a third group in an unemployment workshop office, and two groups arranged activities for children and youth at Villa Elba. Meeting new people is something most of the volunteers expressed as one of the most positive aspects. During the first days of their project, the volunteers attended an on-arrival training where they got to know each other better through different team building exercises. They pointed out that this was important, since they were going to live together for one month. They identified that living and working together and that everybody was a member of the group was important.

The long-term volunteers stayed together in a house in the town and one of them was volunteering at the international department office of Villa Elba and the other one was volunteering mainly outdoors with maintenance work. They also emphasized the feeling of belonging as volunteers at Villa Elba and they felt warmly hosted by Villa Elba. Bauman (2002) states that individuals seek safe relations to other people and everyday structure, although the individualized society offers a loose community. Even though the volunteers are doing their EVS work for a limited time, the structure, routines and cooperation with other volunteers and local people may offer safe relations which Bauman underlines that individuals seeks, and being a volunteer also gives them a role in a wider context.
In contrast to the mentioned individualism above, the volunteers underlined the importance of belonging to the group of volunteers in particular. This is in line with the concept of collectivism in which individuals define themselves in relation to the group (Finkelstein, 2012). Even though individualism is a core element in the present time, the concept of collectivism and belonging to a group seems to be crucial. Besides, the volunteers were experiencing something similar on a particular place and time. The strong connection may be due to the fact that they share this adventure with these people.

**The meaning of European citizenship**

From EU’s point of view, one of the main aims with EVS is to build a sense of European Citizenship among young people in Europe (European Commission, 2013). However, a majority of the volunteers were critical towards the word European citizenship and the idea of an EU in general. One of the long-term volunteers connected this word with utopian terms; he argued that Europe consists of too many nationalities and cultures with too big differences. He explained that:

“It’s something nice but if I hear European Citizenship I will connect it with some countries... and the other part is European wannabes... some European countries defines what it is. They show, they give example to the others. Like not shooting homeless dogs on the street.”

This statement describes critiques of the volunteers own country, after living in another country. The volunteers pointed out culture, religion, climate, mentality, history and economy as differences between the EU countries. They expressed a disappointment in the EU, and that the economic crisis will probably tear the union apart. They expected the young people in Europe to be less active as citizens in the future as well, for example in democracy and in civic duties. The main reason was the lack of job opportunities and the low support from the EU and the governments. A positive aspect of EU was the free movement and they saw the EU as a kind of safe zone with similar rules and laws. EVS was also highlighted as something positive from EU. One long-term volunteer expressed that:

“I believe that after this EVS I can be much more closer to European Citizenship..., because I saw many examples and I lived in an environment that for me could be European environment compared to the one I am use to.”

Ideas of a European identity and citizenship have been encouraged by the European Commission during the last 20 years (Faas, 2007). In the 1988 Resolution accepted by the Council of Ministers of Education, educators where encouraged to ‘strengthen in young people a sense of European identity and make clear to them the value of European civilization and of the foundations on which the European peoples intended to base their development today’ (Council of Ministers of Education 1988, p. 5; referred in Faas, 2007) This feeling of European identity and citizenship was not expressed by the volunteers; instead they stated a disappointment over the EU. Many of them pointed out a lack of support from the EU in their reality at home. This was explained by one short-term volunteer who stated that:
“I think that the biggest problem is the economic crisis has torn Europe apart. It is too big, it is to heavy and I think that a lot of people in my country think that coming into the EU as the start of the crisis...because the jobs that was promised by the EU....there is none. The help from European...nobody can see this...where is the help. Okay EU has some positive sides for example free borders or something like this, but I think that common people does not have anything form this, anything positive. So you don’t show your passport at neighboring countries, that is all that I have experiences from the EU...nothing else and EVS of course.”

This viewpoint describes an ambivalent approach to the EU - firstly disappointment and skepticism towards the EU is stated, and in the final sentence of the sentence EVS is recognized as a personal benefit from the EU. Bauman (2002) claim that a backside of the individualized society is that the meaning of citizenship becomes unclear and loosened up. Individuals tend to be skeptical towards the common good or the fair society. When there an increased responsibility laid on individuals the responsibilities and duties towards the collective sphere becomes ambivalent (ibid.). Further, the changing job market and the difficulties of life planning is increasingly affected my external factors that cannot be controlled by individuals and this can feed the fear of the future. The unstable situation in EU member countries also leads to welfare budget cut downs and the political processes may lead to an increased skepticism towards the EU project (Ziebertz & Kay, 2009).

Discussion

This study aimed to investigate young people’s motives and expectations for participating in an international volunteer project through EVS at youth center Villa Elba in Finland, and to identify which competences the young people think they have developed through EVS. The study was carried out in one particular youth centre in Finland and therefore the results cannot be considered as generalizable for all EVS volunteers in YiA projects. The language barriers are a limitation in the study since none of the EVS volunteers had English as mother tongue. The interview participants may not have been able to express their opinions to the full extent because of this. Nevertheless, the study’s nine respondents were also very open and talkative about the subjects and willing to express their opinions and thoughts.

The analysis indicates that the volunteer’s motives and expectations towards the EVS project clearly show the characteristics of “modern” volunteering. This includes a quest for experiencing an adventure, take a break after school, meet people and have fun, acquire skills. This is in line with the new pattern of self-directed volunteering that Hustinx and Lammertyn (2003) discuss.

The interpretation is connected to motives of volunteering demonstrated earlier by Finkelstein (2008). For example, these motives for volunteering include and are described as: Understanding which stands for obtaining new learning skills and experiences, Social relates to strengthen social relationships and engage with other people and Career and rooted in increasing job and career opportunities (ibid.). The self-interested motives and expectation for volunteering may on one hand be discerned as a self-oriented tool for pursuing self-realization. Although, from the perspective of the individualized society, the volunteers are living in a time when they are responsible of navigating their lives in an unpredicted world
(Bauman, 2002). Hence, to stand out and be flexible are necessary skills which are required of individuals and volunteering can be way of acquiring new skills which are important in the individualized society (ibid.). Parallel to this, the globalized world confronts the volunteers with many options of developing identities and testing lifestyle opportunities. Through adding the EVS project in the self-monitoring project of self-identity, the experience can confirm the individuals identify for him/herself and towards other people (Giddens, 1999). Bauman (2002) notes that in the current era of individualism humans are left alone with the task to shape their own destiny and the responsibility is laid on the individual (ibid.). To volunteer can be a tool to consolidate and stabilize the identity. The reflexive identity process of today encourages people to leave traditional and stable life patterns and try out many different lifestyle options. This offers opportunities and can give people a sense of freedom. On the contrary, traditional living patterns can offer security in knowing what kind of social category one belongs to.

Moreover, one needs to bear in mind that the EVS projects in this study took place in a relatively wealthy country. The most common association with international volunteering is that it takes place in a developing country, and EVS have very little in common with volunteer-tourism programmes which have increased in recent years (Hagh Talab, 2013). Perhaps if that would have been the case, the EVS volunteers motives for volunteering may have been more of a “traditional” model and included the wish of helping other people which face difficult life situations. Seen in the light of the European Commission’s lifelong learning policy, EVS can be understood as a tool to empower young peoples self development and equip young people with competences in order to tackle the uncertain labour market and foster active citizenship (ibid.).

The analysis demonstrates that the EVS experience has had a substantial meaning for the volunteer’s identity creation and has increased their self-esteem and independence. In addition, through shared voluntary activities the volunteers learned to know and trust each other. This is visible in the volunteer’s explanations of how the EVS project has confronted them with new tasks, living with people from other countries and being far away from the ordinary lives safety and routines. The volunteers identified several of the eight competences implemented by the European Commission as developed competences, particularly improvement of English, social and civic competences. The interaction with the other volunteers and staff members can be understood as a key element of these learning developments. The competence development can be understood as taking place in in-formal and non-formal learning setting which is mainly characterized by learning by doing, and a learner centered approach (Hagh Talab, 2013). The Youthpass is implemented to spread the confirmation and recognition of learning outside the formal learning system. This demands self-assessment and the eight key competences have addressed important competences that are important for the future for young people. However, the defined competences are implemented by European Union as a strategy to foster active, engaged and productive young people. Perhaps the lifelong learning strategy is too focused on achievement and development and places too much pressure on young people in an already complex and uncertain world.
The fact that many young people in Europe face an uncertain reality with difficulties on the labour market was confirmed by the volunteers. This is in line with many studies and reports (see for example Evans, Schoon and Weale (2013). And from the theoretical perspective of modernity (Giddens, 1999) underlines the rapid changing life options modern people face. The young generation plays an important role in social and economic spheres of the society and the enormously high unemployment rates among young people in Europe will most probably have serious affects on these young peoples opportunities of reaching an independent and stable life situation. EVS can be understood from one side as an adventure, and an investment in the life biography. On the other hand, EVS can be understood as putting the ordinary life on pause, since EVS the volunteers once they complete their service, must face the same reality as before in an uncertain world. However, the EVS experience may add value as in gaining new competences and opening up for new possibilities. Nevertheless, the findings indicated the variation of north-south European countries in difficulties of job and housing opportunities which is underlined by the European Commission (2012). There seems to be a division between the wealthier north and the poorer south of Europe.

With EVS, the European Commission wants to promote and foster active citizens and promote a sense of European citizenship and values such as tolerance, solidarity and build social inclusion (European Commission, 2013). The volunteers viewpoints on this aspect are perhaps due to the difficult situation they face in their countries. Moreover, as Bauman (2002) emphasize, in an individualized world the concept of citizenship may loosen up. Since the individual are responsible of guiding the life course, and the global trend of decreased government supports the low support for European citizenship is not so surprising after all. Even feelings of a strong national citizenship may be loosening up as well due to the globalisation process.

To sum up, the motives and expectations for participating in EVS can be understood as a tool to cope with biographical uncertainties, learn new skills and gain a broader perspective on the world. EVS can also be a tool for self-realization and achieving personal goals. Regardless of the motives for volunteering the findings indicate that EVS is a valuable medium for learning. Several competences development were identified such as social and civic competence and communication in English, an important aspect of the competence development where there is interaction with other people from other countries. The situation for young people were described as uncertain and severely affected by the current economic crisis.

The study has focused on the volunteers’ opinions about their competence development during the EVS project. A suggestion for future research is to interview other staff, supervisors and mentors involved in the EVS project understand, from their point of view the volunteers competence development. It could contribute to a wider understanding of an individual learning process. Further, the EVS volunteer’s benefits from using Youthpass as a tool for recognition of non-formal learning when seeking employment would be interesting to investigate. Earlier research and this study have focused on the volunteers’ motives and possible competence development through the project. Another perspective would be to study the hosting organisations motives and outcomes from hosting a volunteer, the impact on the local community.
In relation to social work, engagement in volunteering may develop a sense of active citizenship among volunteers. Volunteers may also contribute with knowledge and extra support to other people in vulnerable life positions. On the contrary, the question if volunteers cover up the lack of welfare support in social service is relevant. The particular international volunteering programme EVS aims from EU’s point of view to promote social inclusion among young people through EVS projects. EVS may be a tool for social workers to offer young people who face difficulties such as unemployment. The low cost for the EVS projects for the volunteer can open up this possibility to young people who face economical obstacles.
References


Attachment 1 Interview guide EVS volunteers

Background
- Can you please tell me your name, age and where you’re from?
- What is your background? For example studies, working experiences etc.

Situation of young people in Europe
- How would you describe the situation for young people around your age in your country?
- What kind of support is there for young people in your country?

Preparation
- Please describe how you got to know about EVS, and this project?

Expectations
- What were your expectations towards this EVS project?

EVS project
- How is a normal day here for you?
- What is the most positive and negative aspects of EVS?
- How is your social life here outside the voluntary work?

Support
- What kind of support are you given from your hosting organization?

Personal development
- What new skills have you gained during your project?
- What have you learned about yourself?

Eight key competences
- The European Union has set up eight key competences for lifelong learning among the European citizens. They are:
  - communication in the mother tongue
  - communication in foreign languages
  - mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology
  - digital competence
- learning to learn
- social and civic competences
- sense of initiative and entrepreneurship
- cultural awareness and expression

- Do you think you have developed any of these competences?
- If yes, which ones and how?

**European citizenship**

- What do you associate with the word “European citizen”.
- What do you associate with the word “Active citizen”

**Intercultural learning**

- What did you learn about the new culture and about your own culture?
- Do you see any common values among the hosting cultural and your culture?

**Future**

- What will you bring from your EVS project?
- How do you see your future after the EVS project?
My name is Sandra Östensson and I study social work at Umeå University in Sweden. I am hereby kindly asking you to participate in an interview about European voluntary service (EVS). The aim of this study is to investigate young people’s motives and expectations for participating in EVS and to identify which competences young people think they have developed through EVS.

I will interview EVS volunteers hosted in the youth centre Villa Elba in Finland. The results will be presented in an essay in English through Umeå University in Sweden, and if you want you can have access to the study when it is finished. Further, your participation will be anonymous, and material that can identify you will be avoided. Your participation is voluntary, and you can withdraw your participation at any time without motivation. The interview will be in pairs or in small groups, and will take approximately two hours with a break. You will be asked questions about different themes connected to EVS. The collected data will be kept in a locked desk drawer, and the material will be maculated when the study is finished. If you have any questions during or after the interview you are welcome to contact me.

Greetings
Sandra Östensson
Sandra.ostensson@gmail.com
+46702868916

I hereby agree to participate in the study about EVS; however I have the right to withdraw my participation in the study at any time without motivation. I can do this by contacting Sandra Östensson by email or telephone.

Name........................................................................................................................................
Signature.....................................................................................................................................
Place and date..................................................................................................................................