

## About EVS: “Take All You Can”

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### Abstract

European Voluntary Service is one of the projects which allows European Union countries intercultural interaction. European Voluntary service offers experiences to European citizens such as; developing positive attitude towards multiculturalism, to have cultural prosperity between countries, to respect differences. Participants of the project, find opportunities like; get to know other cultures, to work with other NGO with different culture and learning the country's language and culture. Shortly, individuals interact with another culture in a different language and experience different way of living. Purpose of this study is to determine, how daily work and life experiences affect the living of youngsters who are in Turkey by means of EVS. In this case, phenomenological research approach, one of the qualitative research approaches, is used to understand the life experiences of youngsters who came to Turkey by means of EVS project. Research was carried out with 5 EVS volunteers. (4 girls, 1 boy) All of the participants are from EU countries and they are the citizens of Poland (2), Germany (1), Hungary (1) and Italy (1). Research was made as two sessions in form of focus group and 20-30 minutes meetings were made with the volunteers. During the meetings, open ended questions concerning the subject were asked to the volunteers and comparative approach is constantly used to analyse the data which are obtained from the meetings. According to the research results, volunteers have stated that; they get excited by experiencing new things each day and the experiences they had with EVS are so important and valuable, since those experiences are not reachable in any knowledge. Besides, when they compare EVS with Erasmus, they feel more free and independent. They also declared that, although all of the volunteers had the chance to come to Turkey before, they didn't have a long term living and experience. When the data are analysed, it is understood that, the volunteers came to Turkey with some prejudices but, they didn't have any negative experience about the issues they worried about. When opinions about Turkey from the volunteers are demanded, they pointed out the differences between the east part and west part of Turkey and the distinctive differences between the Turks who live in their country and the Turks in Turkey. Volunteers stated that, the reasons why they are volunteers in Turkey are; Turkey has a different cultural structure from Europe and the strategic location of Turkey (a bridge between Asia and Europe) And they also had Turkish friends and they came to Turkey before. When opinions about learning language in EVS programme is asked, they stated that, they want to learn Turkish, but compared to other languages, Turkish is a very hard language. By underlining the importance of intercultural learning, the volunteers stated that everybody should do EVS, they found what they expected about EVS and if they had another chance to do EVS in other NGOs, they would definitely do it again. In conclusion, in spite of the fact that EVS volunteers had improved slogans for Turkey such as; “The Country of Contrasts”, “Country Eating Itself”, they don't have a certain negative perception for Turkey. It was indicated that they are quite happy to be EVS volunteers. As a result, individuals stated that, in gaining intercultural experiences, EVS is immensely important and they will benefit from the experiences they gained from EVS in Turkey for their future life. On the strength of research findings, intercultural experiences has a great impact on reaching to be a European citizen.

## **Introduction**

International student mobility has gained worldwide importance in the last 20 years in the name of professional evolution. (Stronkhorst, 2005) In the same way, similar mobilities like student mobility is encountered nearly in every field. In mobilities, basic purposes like, being european citizen, breaking the prejudices, knowing the other cultures are aimed. Intenden for these aims, European Union has prepared some programmes.

Union Programmes are the complement of activities which are carried out to encourage collaboration between EU countries and candidate countries about union policies in certain fields for some time. Citizens, business firms, NGOs, public institutions have the chance of attendance to Union Programme. Turkey, as a candidate country, ensure participation to Union Programmes. One of the fields of this programme is European Union Youth Programme.

In European Union Youth Programme, there are several opportunities devoted to youth, youth groups, NGOs and public corporations. In Youth Programme, there are many opportunities for all youngsters. NGOs, public corporations and simple groups can apply for the projects. The programs under the branch of youth programmes are called "actions". In these actions there are; Action 1.1 Youth Exchanges, Action 1.2 Youth Initiatives, Action 1.3 Youth Democracy Projects, Action 2 European Voluntary Service, Action 3.1 Cooperation With EU Neighbour Countries, Action 4.3 Youth Workers and Training and Networking for Youth Corporations, Action 5.1 Meetings For The Ones Responsible For Youth and Youth Policies.

As it is seen, European Voluntary Service is conducted under the title of "Action2", connected with Youth Programme. EVS, is a programme which enable youth between 18-30 to work as a volunteer abroad in a social thematic project from 2 months to 12 months. Within the scope of the programme the costs of accommodation, food, travel and visa is provided by the National Agency of the country that the volunteer will go. The volunteers take language classes in that country and they come back to their countries with a certificate named "youthpass". The only condition to be a volunteer is to be between 18-30.

The volunteers need an NGO in Turkey which they will present abroad. Accredited NGOs in Turkey, do a mediator between the NGO abroad and the volunteer. DeM (Experiential Training Center), which is an accredited NGO by Turkish National Agency, is a coordinator, host and sending organization in Eskişehir, Turkey.

DeM, which is an experienced foundation in the field of EVS, supports volunteers only within the scope of EVS both in Turkey and abroad within the web page named, "EVS TURKEY" and online support system, designed for EVS.

So far DeM, hosted 2 long term EVS volunteers within the scope of Youth information Works at DeM Eskişehir media Office. At the same time, DeM carries out projects as coordinator organization. As it is seen civil society has a big importance in experiencing other cultures and being european citizen. In this study the experiences devoted to being european citizen will be searched. The main purpose in his study is to determine the daily and cultural experiences of the long term volunteers who came to Turkey with EVS.

## **Method**

In this study phenomenographic investigation method, one of the qualitative research techniques, is used. Phenomenographic investigation method is a research method which exhibits the experiences of the individuals. ( Ersoy and Günel, 2011) In phenomenographic

investigation method non of the analyzing methods are used. Analyzes are up to researcher. For the investigation method, purposeful sampling method is chosen, as two sessions 20-30 minutes long focus group meeting technic is used and in this period open ended questions ( meeting questions are asked by two people in English) are asked.

To increase the persuasiveness of the study, the meeting texts are shown to the attendants and to elaborate the views about the subject any idea is wanted from them. But, none of the attendants made any changes or corrections. Likewise, another specialist's (someone who made qualitative researchs and independent from the researchers) view is taken to control the datas. (Lincoln & Guba, 1985)

### Study Group

The study group of this study consists of the EVS volunteers who came to Turkey with an NGO named DeM. Four of this volunteers are woman, one is man. All of the volunteers are european citizens and they are from Poland (2), Germany (1), Hungary (1) and Italy (1). Hungarian volunteers speaks Turkish fluently and he came to Turkey with Erasmus programme before. Hungarian volunteer took English classes in his country. After he finished his Erasmus programme he came to Turkey twice before EVS. And all of the volunteers have come to Turkey before EVS for the touristic purpose.

Name	Nationality	Educational Status	Gender	Age	Period in Turkey
David	Hungarian	University	M		6 months
Magda	Polish	University	F		6 months
Anna	Polish	University	F		6 months
Federica	Italian	University	F		6 months
Helga	German	University	F		6 months

### Findings

In this part the findings of the research take part. To contribute the purpose of the research, the informations in consequence of the questions are grouped according to the themes. Findings are grouped as, the ideas and experiences before they came to Turkey, the experiences during their stay in Turkey, ideas about EVS, ideas about Turkish.

**Before arriving Turkey:** Nearly all of the attendants stated that, they had prejudices before arriving Turkey. For example, German attendant said; " The Turks who live in Germany are quite different from the one who live in Turkey. My opinion about Turks have changed when i was here." The Hungarian volunteer said; "I understood that, the Turks who live in Hungary are really different, I saw that the Turks are not that bad". Italian attendant stated that, " They told me that i am going to be harrassed in Turkey. But the one who can do that can not be Turks" Polish participant said; " My close friends in Poland told me bad things about Turkey. I didn't have a clear image before coming." But all of the images they had about Turkey have changed after coming to Turkey and all the images they have now are positive. In brief, the volunteers stated that the images they had in their mind are because of the warnings they had

before coming. The slogans they said about Turkey are; “We are happy to be in Turkey. We want to be here again. Because Turkish people are so different”.

**The experiences they had during their stay in Turkey:** They encountered with too much bureaucracy, very dirty and noisy, hospitable, kind, very funny, too warm, kind people. West and east parts are really different. So, Turkey is the country of contrasts.

**The ideas about Turkish:** Unlike Erasmus, we learn a different language. We are in interaction with Turks. That is why there is no any possibility in learning Turkish. Turkish is different grammatically. In my country they think that, Turkish has Arabic letters. But I say no. I will keep on learning English when I turn back to my country.

**Experiences about EVS:** I am happy that I am doing voluntary service instead of doing a master or working. I had big experiences by working with other cultures. I have self confidence now. EVS is a very beneficial project. We are so free and we learn a different language. In EVS you can improve yourself. We are happy that we are doing voluntary service. We are able to know the people for this country. We will transfer our experiences to our daily lives when we go back to our countries. We found everything we were looking for in EVS. Not having strict working hours is really nice. You should take all you can with EVS. I learn new things each day. I explore. This is exciting. EVS is fun. Everyone should do EVS.

## DISCUSSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

In this case, the volunteers who participated in EVS, can use the experiences they had in Turkey back in their countries. Similar results have been taken in similar Works. (Ersoy and Günel, 2011; Şahin, 2008) To be European citizen, to involve in other cultures and experience their way of living, EVS and other mobility projects are important. According to the findings of the individuals who participated in this research it can be said that; early education of the individuals' about multiculturalism is important in preventing prejudices. The prejudices, the attendants had are about the Turkish people who live in their countries. But those prejudices have turned to be positive after coming Turkey and they had positive judgments about Turkey and Turks. One of the critics about Turkey is Turkey has to do something to break the prejudices. This is because of the lack of introduction of Turkey whether in national or international platforms. The volunteers have compared EVS with Erasmus during the meeting.

When compared to each other both of the are mobility programme and they have similar purposes. But when asked to volunteers, they think that EVS is more advantageous than Erasmus. They said that they are more free in EVS, they are flexible and they have the chance to learn Turkish. And one of the remarkable points that, when all the positive and negative experiences asked to volunteers they didn't say any negative things about EVS.

Volunteers, underline the importance of learning other countries and cultures in that country instead of learning them in their country. Same findings match up with other work. (Ersoy and Günel, 2011; Papatsiba, 2006)

As hosting organization DeM, have taught Turkish to volunteers. But the volunteers stated that it was really hard to learn Turkish. The reason of this is Turkish's grammar structure and the hardness of the pronunciation. Language is a tool which helps people to communicate. As an example water is “su” in Turkish, Arabs say “ma” to it and in English it is water. Every language has its own laws and rules. Languages are explored in two points according to their sources and structures. In Indo-European group, except from Hungarian and Finnish there are all European languages. In European branch there are German languages, (German, English,

Scandinavian), Roman languages (French, Italian, Spanish) and Slav languages (Russian, Bulgarian, Serbian)

Languages, according to their structures are explored in three groups. Monosyllabic, additive and synthetic languages. Turkish like Hungarian and Japanese are agglutinating. Turkish is in the branch of Ural Altaic group. The familiarity in Indo-European is not the same in Ural Altaic group. According to these informations the Hungarian volunteer's learning Turkish is not that hard. Hungarian language is grammatically similar to Turkish. So it was easy for him to learn Turkish. All of the volunteers stated that learning a language in 6 months is quite hard. That is why they will keep on learning Turkish back in their countries. That is why the paths in teaching Turkish must be revised. National agency can make additional works seeing that Turkish is harder for any European. The structure of Turkish and its grammatical structure made it hard for the volunteers to learn it except from the Hungarian volunteer. As it is known, Turkish has a different sentence structure from other languages. One of the reasons why it is different is Turkish is a language which is written as it is read. This situation comes from Turkish alphabet's phonetic characteristics. When compared, the word "write" in English is written with a "w" which is not read at all. "C" in English is pronounced sometimes "s" (city) and sometimes "k", (control) in Turkish.

Turkish has too many items in word derivation. In Turkish, these items are 96. (Aksan, 1987; 30) When it comes to this, while teaching Turkish those items should be taught also. Compared to European languages, those items are much more in Turkish. And in Turkish syllables at least one letter, (a-e, ı-i-o-ö-u-ü). And 4 letters most. (kart, kurt etc.) In Turkish it is possible to make 6 different syllables. (a, al, ye, taş, alt, erk, kart etc)

In Turkish to be able to reach the words voices come together and make the syllables, syllables come together and make words. So, if explored deeper it will be understood that Turkish is quite different from Indo-European languages. That is why, the citizens who come from Europe can not learn Turkish quite easily. According to that in teaching Turkish, those differences must be taught to the ones who are keen to learn Turkish. In this learning process, listening, speaking, reading, writing must be taught on whole and the structure of Turkish must be taught. (collocations, sound events, syllable structure, derivation power and phonetics.)

As a result, it is understood from this research findings that, EVS volunteers do not have any negative ideas about Turkey. They always told that they are quite happy to be EVS volunteers. Individuals, stated that EVS is really important in learning other cultures and in their future life they will transfer the experiences they had in EVS. According to research findings it can be said that, EVS is very important in having intercultural experiences and reaching to be a real European citizen.

### **Suggestions:**

- Qualitative research method about international mobility is used in this work. In those kind of researches quantitative research methods can be used also.
- In European countries there can be classes starting from primary school in which different cultures are introduced. Prejudices picked up here and there from 100 years ago can be erased. Thanks to that, prejudices like this can be broken about Turkey and other 3 World Countries.
- Turkey's cultural brand positioning must be made better in international platforms. For that, congress, fairs, cultural and artificial activities (family culture, food habits, dialogue styles) must be done. Families can visit each other and have a chance to know

each other much better. With that it can be much easier to combine countries and people closely.

- Media must raise awareness with the news and programmes about EVS and EVS volunteers must have a additive role in Turkey.
- In short term, studies in Turkish teaching can be made with strangers
- Communication with social groups must be arranged for the foreigners for them to practice Turkish. In this topic, educated people who would like to improve their English skills can help to people who want to learn English or French.
- The difficulties that foreigners have while learning Turkish must be searched and topics that cause the problem must be identified and solutions must be produced.
- New methods must be revised about Turkish teaching. Those methods must be suitable to Turkish grammar structure. Listening, speaking, reading and writing must be taken as a whole and during these practices the phonetic structure of Turkish, word derivation power, syntaxes must be told to the learner.
- After using methods which are revised and implemented comparative methods must be suggested.
- Responsibilities in presenting Turkey can be given to the people who comes to Turkey.

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