

## **EYV 2011 - VOLUNTEERING MATTERS**

### **Impact of Youth Volunteering in Turkey**

**April - October 2011**

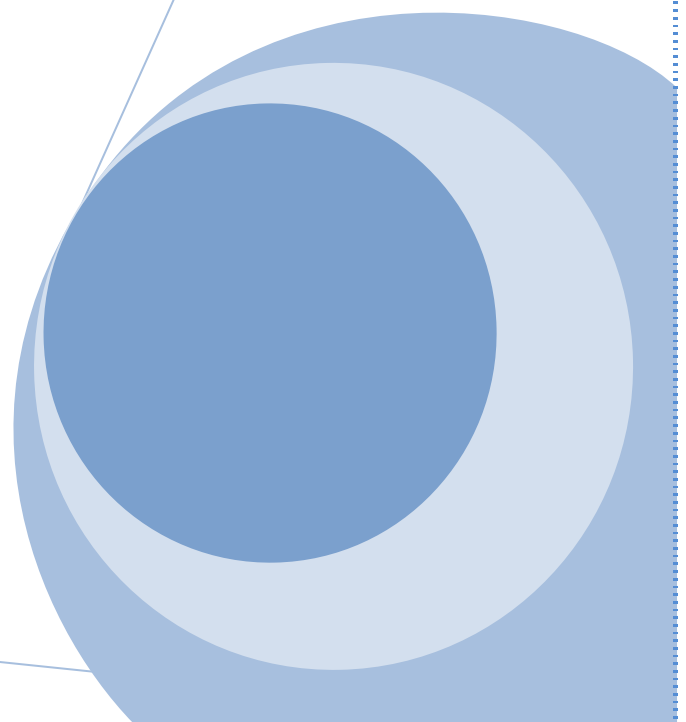
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# 1 Introduction

*Turkey*. Muslim country, 80 million habitants, located between Asia and Europe, official language: Turkish. *Ecuador*. Christian country, 13 million, South-America, Spanish... Is there any matching point, any common issue? The only I can imagine, besides a football match, is *volunteerism*. 2011 was declared the European Year of Volunteering and as a result many activities were developed to promote volunteerism at an international level. The *Volunteering Matters* project is one of these initiatives aiming to gather information about 16 different countries in terms of this topic and the *European Voluntary Service* situation in each nation respectively.

The following data present the experience of an Ecuadorian volunteer living in Turkey for six months. The investigation comprises a general overview of the volunteerism in Turkey and the development of EVS in Turkey, taking into consideration its challenges and benefits through the perspective of international volunteers, hosting organizations and local communities<sup>1</sup>.

There were carried out 37 interviews with the actors previously mentioned. In addition, other information sources are considered: 2 EVS trainings (each of them with the participation of more than 35 international young people) and the International Youth festival *GapGenc* with the involvement of around 200 youngsters. On all these occasions, formal questionnaires and personal interviews were developed, as well as some group discussions. Moreover, during the six months several important organizations were visited like the Turkish National Agency, Turkish International Red Cross and local volunteering projects of the university. Finally, the European Voluntary Service experience by itself represented the main space for getting first hand information not only on the situation of the voluntary service and international volunteers' perspectives, but also of that of Turkish society.

On the other hand, it is important to point out that language was a challenge in the entire data collecting process. Thus, the possibility of incomplete or partial data should be taken into account. The investigation will present a critical approach and should not be taken as representative for volunteering in Turkey in general. Precisely because I believe in social contribution and in its potential (EVS influenced even my South-American conception of volunteerism), gaps and challenges are emphasized in order to offer solutions for its improvement.

## 2 Overview of Volunteering in Turkey

### ***History of volunteerism in Turkey and its society perception***

It is very difficult to establish a certain date when volunteerism began. In the Turkish context, historical data takes us to around the 13 century. During the Ottoman times, the origin Arabic word *Vakif* or *Waqf* (*foundation*) was the premier institutional mechanism for helping people with disabilities and providing them public services such as education, health and social security. That's how the first nonprofit organizations were founded in Ottoman Empire.

*Imece* (*collective work*) is an example going back to the time of emigration of the first Anatolian people from Middle Asia. Abandoning nomadic life and settling down implied the need for social organization. Collective work was thus needed in order to build the first villages in Turkey. This meaning of *collective work* is still present in many of the small villages, showing the huge impact of *imece* in Turkish society.

For instance in some towns, people come together and *worked for the whole community* picking up products from the farm, cleaning the farm, interchanging products, it's like *social contribution*. The main aim is *to share* and *to contribute because* ...by this way it becomes quickly and easily. (Communication student)

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<sup>1</sup> This investigation also includes arts activities and a video. For further information, contact [estefy.san.andres@gmail.com](mailto:estefy.san.andres@gmail.com)

In the school we learnt about it *Dayanishma (solidarity, cooperation)*...maybe IMECE they are still doing in small villages, but in the cities the atmosphere is completely different. Also there are many different ethnic groups in Turkey, they still have collective work in their own ways. (Graphic Designer)

Also the Islam religion plays an important role in this respect, as it is one of the most relevant principles of this religion belief. In Islam ideology, '*helping each other*', '*doing favors*' and '*sharing with guests*' have the same immense importance as other moral doctrines like "worship" and "cleanness". The cited idea is the key of the understanding of Turkish behavior in relation with volunteerism. As the girl mention, there isn't a formal conceptualization of the term about, because *helping* is a normal conduct. This fact can be concreted in the Turkish hospitality tradition and many phrases used in daily life like:

Together... for others... for us... to make it easy". "If you see somebody who needs help, just help him (it doesn't matter if she is Catholic, Christian, Jewish or her ethnical identity...)." (Young girl, 25 years)

Considering this context, it is almost impossible to believe in some international statistics that depict a rather low level of voluntary participation in Turkey. "Rates of Participations in Volunteering and Characteristics of Volunteers: European Comparisons" states a very low Turkish participation rate in volunteering (6.4%)<sup>2</sup>. The study emphasizes however that data is refers solely to formal volunteering, that is volunteering carried out through organizations. The lower participation of Turkish society in the formal volunteering sector can be explained by the higher importance possibly given to informal volunteering and the relevant role of family relations. As such, the study affirms: "people form ethnic minorities are more active informally in the framework of large social and family networks".

Basically, the evolution of formal volunteering in Turkey began to develop just after the WW II, when the 'Foundation for Social and Volunteering Work' was funded, through United Nations Help and the Social Services Institute created in 1959. After this, it was possible to increase social services by founding schools to educate social workers. Followed by these positive developments, another incident that affected most of the stakeholder groups, civil society organizations and the government is the 1999 Izmit earthquake in northwestern Turkey. The state's ineffectiveness to respond to the earthquake and providing relief services was filled by immediate civic mobilization, both individual and corporate. Thus, many NGOs and volunteer groups actively involved in the rescue processes as well as the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the destroyed areas.

University interaction plays a relevant role as a bridge between communities and volunteering organizations. Universities active in this field are: Ankara University, Middle East Technical University and Istanbul Bilgi University with the Youth Studies Unit founded in 2005 with the aim to contribute to the development of non-governmental youth organizations, providing opportunities for dialogue between these organizations and public institutions.<sup>3</sup>

Other significant NGOs and social organizations in Turkey, most of which have voluntary services, voluntary activities and/or voluntary educational programmes in cooperation with the related Ministries and organizations are as follows:

*Community Volunteers Foundation (CVF)/ (TOG)* can be considered as one of the biggest organizations in Turkey. Since its foundation in 2002, CVF has carried out plenty of activities in order to make youth aware of social contribution benefits.

*Educational Volunteers Foundation/ (TEGV)* was founded in 1995 and is known for their mission to provide non-formal educational opportunities for children and youth in need.

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<sup>2</sup> 9<sup>th</sup> International Conference of the International Society for Third- Sector Research, Rates of Participations in Volunteering and Characteristics of Volunteers: European Comparisons, Turkey, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> Some of the activities carried out by this Unit are 'The GePGeNç FeSTiVaL', ([www.gepgencfestival.net](http://www.gepgencfestival.net)); the Turkish coordination of the "All Different – All Equal" European Youth Campaign and its weekly radio program (2006-2007); and the "Living Library" project (<http://yasayankutuphane.blogspot.com>). Further information could be found in [www.genclik.bilgi.edu.tr](http://www.genclik.bilgi.edu.tr).

*Is there anybody?* (Kimse Yok Mu?) is an intervention organization in the field of Rescue and Research from natural disaster. It is a local organization but also supports and takes part in international disasters.

*Private Sector Volunteers Foundation* (OSGD) is conducting significant activities related to Corporate Social Responsibility. Established in 2002, the foundation's main activity is to link corporations with NGOs by promoting volunteerism and giving trainings.

*Third Sector Foundation of Turkey's* (TÜSEV) mission is to strengthen the legal, fiscal and operational infrastructure of the third sector in Turkey. Some of its activities are supported from the *Charities Aid Foundation*, and the *Corporate Volunteer Council*.

Other active organizations include: *THEMA* (Environmental organization), *Volunteers Association Foundation*<sup>4</sup> (Toplum Gönüllüleri Vakfı), *ANTGAP/ ANTGED*, *Family Educational Association* (Aile Eğitim Derneği), *Gaziantep Eğitim ve Gençlik Derneği*, *Gaziantep Gençlik ve Kültür Derneği*, *Gazi University*<sup>5</sup>; and some of them located in the cities more active regarding volunteerism like Istanbul, Antalya, Gaziantep, Ankara and Izmir.

International volunteering involves organizations such as: United Nations Volunteers, VSO, Weltwaerts and DED (German Development Service). There are others relevant international organizations like '*EIL-Turkey*', the VIP local office in this country, founded in 1959. Its areas of work include primary education, disable people, health and intercultural learning.

Even though the previous cited agencies are developing their projects in Turkey, neither the DED (*German Development Service*) nor the VSO and ICYE (*International Cultural Youth Exchange*) have a volunteering presence in this country. Especially in the case of the DED, this is a dissatisfactory fact taking into account the considerable number of Turkish migrants in Germany. Volunteering initiatives could provide a way of increasing interaction between youth from these two countries and promoting a better understanding and respect vis-à-vis cultural differences.

## 3 Action Research

### 3.1 ANALYSIS OF VOLUNTEERS' INPUTS

After having interviewed international volunteers, who are developing or developed the European Voluntary Service in Turkey, much information was collected related with all aspects in their volunteering experience. The obtained data have been summarized and their analysis would be presented in the following paragraphs and charts. Quotes or citations from people interviewed have also been included to support this study and to allow volunteers to 'speak for themselves'.

To enable a better understanding of the statistics and results presented, I provide a short profile of the volunteers<sup>6</sup>. In terms of general information, only around 25% of them had previously participated in an international volunteer activity for no longer than 1 and a half month.<sup>7</sup> The rest of them have no previous experience in this field. In addition, just 16% of the people interviewed are participating in a short-term EVS programme, while 84% of them are long-term volunteers; thus most young people appear to volunteer for the long-term.

In relation to 'working hours', 44% of the volunteers stated that they work less than 20 hours per week, as compared to 39% who said "between 20-35" and a 18% who stated that they work more than 35 hours. These figures alone suggest that something is amiss. I hope the answer to this and other questions is received in the information below.

<sup>4</sup> They were accredited as EVS Organization, but they are not member anymore.

<sup>5</sup> Its active participation is in regards of sending organization.

<sup>6</sup> For detailed information of every questionnaire, look for the original interview or compare the evolution of each volunteer's answers in the, 'compilation document'.

<sup>7</sup> With the exception of 1 volunteer who participated in a 2-year programme.

### 3.1.1 Motivation

The different motivations for volunteering can provide clues to understanding not only the expectations of the youth but also the perception and definition of volunteering. The following tables, as all the graphs used in this investigation contain Latin alphabetical letters, represent each of the 18 interviews conducted. Additionally, the numbered answers on the top of each statement are taken as follows: 1 = disagree, 2 = neither agree nor disagree, and 3 = agree. Moreover, in order to understand and analyse the information, a colour has been given to each answer according to the particular percentage. Thus, the colours in the charts are taken as: **blue** = the majority (more than 50%); **orange** = some (between 30%-50%); white = the minority (less than 30%).

	(1)	(2)	(3)
I had a desire to participate in volunteering as a way to reduce social or economic inequality.	e, n, q,	a, b, c, f, g, i, j, l, o, p, r,	d, h, k, m,
I thought that the volunteer experience would give me skills useful in school or in a job.		d, f, i, k, l, m, n,	a, b, c, e, g, h, j, o, p, q, r,
I had a desire to make a difference by helping others.		b, i, k, l, o, p, q, r,	a, c, d, e, f, g, h, j, m, n,
I needed a job.	a, b, c, d, e, g, i, j, k, m, n, o, q, r,	f, l, p,	h,
A friend or co-worker was involved with the organization.	b, c, d, e, g, i, j, k, l, m, n, o, q, r,		a, f, h, p,
I was asked by a school or organization.	a, b, c, d, e, g, h, i, j, k, l, m, n, o, p, q, r,		f,
I wanted to make friends and meet people.		d, g, n,	a, b, c, e, f, h, i, j, k, l, m, o, p, q, r,
I wanted to gain greater cross-cultural understanding.			a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, j, k, l, m, n, o, p, q, r,
I wanted to travel or live abroad.	f,	d, g, i, j, k,	a, b, c, e, h, l, m, n, o, p, q, r,
I wanted to gain international experience and language skills.		d, l, q,	a, b, c, e, f, g, h, i, j, k, m, n, o, p, r,
I wanted to have a challenging and meaningful experience.		a,	b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, j, k, l, m, n, o, p, q, r,

According to the table on above, the factors that influenced the interviewed to participate in an international volunteering program are: The desire to gain greater cross-cultural understanding (100%) and the desire to have a challenging and meaningful experience (95%). A large percentage of volunteers (89%) also chose the statement 'I wanted to make friends and meet people' and 'I wanted to gain international experience and language skills'. These figures are followed by the wish to travel or living abroad (67%). It can thus be concluded that the main motivations are related to an international and cultural experience in all its aspects (e.g. language, personal challenges, people, travelling). The following quotes support this information:

"I just wanted to go the most far away I could from my hometown... somehow escaping from my life and getting closer to eastern, exotic cultures, for which Turkey is the door...also I wanted to know other cultures, understand them and through them maybe understand myself." (French v.)

"For many of the volunteers it's just like a break, after finishing studies, they just want to spend some time outside, to travel, to discover new cultures, to get experience and develop some skills..." (Latvian v.)

Only 61% of the volunteers agreed that through volunteering they could gain professional or useful skills for a school or a job. Finally, 56% related volunteerism with the opportunity to make a difference by helping others; and 61% neither agreed nor disagreed that volunteerism as a way to reduce social or economic inequality.



Over and above, there are other factors that motivate young people to volunteer abroad.

### 3.1.2 Activities and Impact Areas

In the next table, the numbered answers at the top are related with the effectiveness of the volunteer in doing his/her tasks. The scale is taken so: 0 = not applicable, 1 = ineffective, 2 = neither effective nor ineffective, and 3 = effective. The colours have the same meaning as the previous chart: **blue** = the majority (more than 50%); **orange** = some (between 30%-50%); white = the minority (less than 30%).

	NA (0)	(1)	(2)	(3)
Providing universal primary education	c, d, f, g, k, l, m, r,	e, h, q,	a, b, i, j, n, o, p,	
Tutoring or teaching children, youth, or adults	f, l, m,	h,	a, c, j, o, q,	b, d, e, g, i, k, n, p, r,
Helping community members learn to read, speak, write or understand English or another foreign language	c, d, f, i, m, q,	a, j,	h, l, p,	b, e, g, k, n, o, r,
Helping community members learn to read or write in their local language	a, c, d, e, f, g, i, j, k, l, m, n, o, p, q, r,	b,	h,	
Combating HIV/AIDS, malaria or other infectious diseases/Providing medical health care or prevention	a, b, c, d, e, f, g, i, j, k, l, m, n, o, p, q, r,		h,	
Promoting environmental sustainability	c, d, e, f, g, i, j, k, l, m, n, o, p, q, r,	a,	b, h,	
Promoting gender equality or empowering women and families	c, e, f, g, i, j, l, n, o, p, q, r,		a, b, h, k, m,	d,
Reducing child mortality or improving maternal health	a, c, d, e, f, g, i, j, k, l, m, n, o, p, q, r,		b, h,	
Providing economic and social opportunities for youth	a, f, i, j, k, l, m, n, o, p, q,	g,	b, c, h, r,	d, e,
Caring for infants and/or children in a daycare facility	a, d, e, f, g, i, j, k, l, m, n, o, p, q, r,		b, h,	c,
Providing assistance for the elderly	a, c, d, e, g, i, j, k, l, m, n, o, p, q, r,		b, h,	f,
Providing physical therapy or other assistance to people with disabilities	c, e, f, g, i, j, k, l, m, n, o, r,		a, b, d, h, q,	p,
Helping introduce legislation or influencing public sector reform	a, c, e, d, f, g, i, j, k, l, m, n, o, p, q, r,	b,	h,	
Lobbying the host country government for increased resources to an organization	a, c, d, e, f, i, j, k, n, o, p, q, r,	g,	h, l, m,	b,
Collecting, preparing, or distributing, food, crafts, or other goods	d, e, f, g, i, j, k, l, m, n, o, p, q, r,	a,	b, h,	c,
Building or providing housing	c, d, e, f, g, i, j, k, l, m, n, o, p, q, r,		b, h,	a,
Providing disaster and humanitarian response and preparedness	a, c, d, e, f, g, i, j, k, l, m, n, o, p, q, r,	b,	h,	
Improving access to information technology	c, d, e, f, g, i, j, k, q, l, m, n, o, p,	b,	h,	a, r,
Supporting conflict resolution and peace	c, d, e, f, g, i, j, k, l, m, n, o, p, q, r,	a, b,	h,	
Encouraging economic growth through micro-enterprise, agricultural, or rural development	a, c, d, e, f, g, i, j, k, l, n, o, p, q, r,		b, h, m,	
Strengthening civil society	f, g, i, o, q,		a, b, c, h, j, l, m, n, p,	d, e, k, r,
Promoting cross-cultural exchange		g,	a, c,	b, d, e, f, h, i, j, k, l, m, n, o, p, q, r,

Other comments:

“Most of the volunteers before going to EVS have experienced some complicated situation or unstable period in their life (maybe they broke up with their boy/girlfriends, maybe they finish high school or university, they don't have any job or simple they don't know what to do...) maybe they just want to escape for a moment and try luck somewhere else...these are the really motivations.” (Greek v.).

“For other young people volunteering it's just maybe a fashion or life style or just to show off in the future that they were doing something for society...in my opinion 10% of volunteers could have a really social conscience of what this word means...perhaps this is the reason why also many people don't see it as something valuable that will help you also in a professional way... (adult people) they think it could be only a waste time...” (French v.).

“When I was thinking in volunteerism many things passed through my mind like travelling, friends, fun, a great experience, new language, new cultures; even disappearing for a moment from the place where I was...of course all of these aspects are important, but they should be just a *plus* for the real motivation of volunteering: this sharing with others, this helping and receiving at the same time” (Portuguese v.).

This above data shows, firstly, the lack of voluntary organizations related to most of the topics exposed above, especially health, environment, elderly people, public sector reforms, economic growth through micro-enterprise and agricultural, or rural development.

A special case is the sector of the gender equality or empowerment of women because even though 67% of the people expressed that it is not applicable to their projects, 5% of the rest said that is totally related to their projects. Since this field is so transcendental in Turkey, special considerations should be taken on it. Concerning the effectiveness of the volunteers, the promotion of cross-cultural exchange (89%) followed by tutoring or teaching children, youth, or adults (52%) are the more chosen statements. Also, 39% of them stated being effective by helping community members learn to read, speak, write or understand foreign languages.

In addition to this, the strongest response for being neither effective nor ineffective is related with strengthening civil society (50%), followed by providing universal primary education as well as tutoring (39%); providing physical therapy or other assistance to people with disabilities (27%) and providing economic and social opportunities for youth (22%).

### 3.1.3 Training/ Institutional Support

The next chart expresses the level of volunteer's satisfaction in terms of the preparation and support they received from their project, sending or host organisation. The top answers numbers are taken so: 1 = disagree (never or rarely), 2 = neither agree nor disagree (sometimes), and 3 = agree (often). The colours meaning: blue = the majority (more than 50%); orange = some (between 30%-50%); white = the minority (less than 30%).

	Disagree (1)	(2)	(3)
I received thorough training on the host culture.	e, j, k, l, m, n, o, p, q,	a, d, g, h, i,	b, c, f, r,
I received thorough training on my volunteer duties at your project.	e, g, i, j, k, m, n, o, p, q,	a, c, d, h, l,	b, f, r,
Sending organization staff supported me well before and throughout my volunteer placement.	g,	d, h, i, j, k, l, m, o, q, r,	a, b, c, e, f, n, p,
Local staff supported me well throughout my volunteer placement.	e, l, m, o,	c, d, g, h, i, j, k, n, p, q,	a, b, f, r,
I was trained through everyday tasks.	c, e, i, j, k, l, m, n, o, p, q,	a, d, g, r,	b, f, h,



The graph reveals that there is a strong lack of training and institutional support, especially talking about the hosting organizations as the majority of the volunteers disagreed to having received preparation for their duties at the project (56%) and related to the host culture (50%). Only 20% of the rest of them expressed agreement on this topic. In addition, 61% of the people affirmed to be rarely or never trained through everyday tasks.

The case of the sending organizations is a slightly different, but doesn't show complete effectiveness from the perspective of the volunteer. Related to staff support before and throughout the service, only 39% of the interviewed stated that they often received this support, while 56% of them claimed to have received it sometimes.

On the other hand, 22% cited having never or rarely received support from the local staff, as compared to the 78% who said they expressed to received some support, and another 22% who often received support.

### 3.1.4 Cultural Immersion

In the next chart, the scale is represented by: 1 = disagree (never or rarely), 2 = neither agree nor disagree (sometimes), and 3 = agree (often). The colours meaning: blue = the majority (more than 50%); orange = some (between 30%-50%); white = the minority (less than 30%).

	Disagree (1)	(2)	Agree (3)
It organizes a lot of activities between the volunteers.	c, e, h, i, j, k, l, m, o, p, q,	g, n,	a, b, d, f, r,
It organizes a lot of activities which include the host community.	e, g, h, i, j, k, n, o, p, q,	f, l, m,	a, b, c, d, r,
My activities are more related to work in the community.	e,	a, d, g, h, i, l, m,	b, c, f, j, k, n, o, p, q, r,
My activities are more related to the host organization's international work.	a, c, d, g, i, j, k, m, n, o, p, q, r,	f, h,	b, e, l,
In any activity, the volunteers are asked to participate.	c, g, j, k, n, o, p, q,	e, f, i,	a, b, d, h, l, m, r,
The host organization provides the support when planning activities.	i, m, n, o, p,	e, h, j, k, l, q,	a, b, c, d, f, g, r,
I can see that the host organization and the community have a good communication.	e, p,	c, h, i, j, k, l, m, n,	a, b, d, f, g, o, q, r,
I think my hosts knew a lot about me before I came.	a, c, e, i, j, k, l, m, n, o, q, r,	d, f, g, h, p,	b,

The colours and numbers in the table illustrate that the majority of the volunteers, around 60%, stated that the organization never or rarely develops a lot of activities among the volunteers, and that includes the host community. Nevertheless, a large percentage stated that often their activities are more related to the work in the community (56%), compared to 17% who indicated having developed activities often related with host organization's international work. This could be the link as a result of which 44% of the volunteers interviewed stated that they have good relations and communication with the local community. Also, in some cases there are volunteers who develop activities themselves together with the local community, like the author of the quote below:

“Another problem would also be a different conception of the work and how to handle it. Barriers were created... the inertia of the organization, no activities with the community... but we had to overcome this situation through our own creativeness and sense of initiative.”(Belgium v.)

When the volunteers were asked to participate in any activity, there is almost the same number of interviewed people who said that this never or rarely happens and that they are often included in all activities. This contradiction corresponds more to personal characteristics and could be answered

taking into consideration the level of interaction and adaptation process that every volunteer undergoes within the local community.

### 3.1.5 General Impact

The next chart illustrates the general impacts and the possible implications of the voluntary service through the scale: 1 = disagree (never or rarely), 2 = neither agree nor disagree (sometimes), and 3 = agree (often). The colours meaning: blue = the majority (more than 50%); orange = some (between 30%-50%); white = the minority (less than 30%).

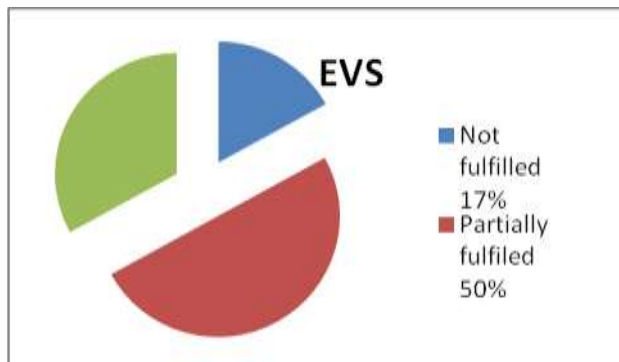
	Disagree (1)	(2)	Agree (3)
I had a specific skill needed by the host organization.	c, d, e, q,	a, h, i, l, o, r,	b, f, g, j, k, m, n, p,
I transferred useful skills to the host organization.	h, q,	a, c, e, i, j, k, l, m, n, o, r,	b, d, f, g, p,
I made a lasting contribution to the organization or community members.	e, g, h, o, q,	a, c, i, k, l, m, n, p, r,	b, d, f, j,
My services could have been more effectively provided by a full-time staff member.	f, g, i, j, k, m, n, o, p, q, r,	a, c, d,	b, e, h, l,
If I had not volunteered, a local staff member would have provided these services.	c, d, e, f, j, k, n, p, r,	g, i, o,	a, b, h, l, m, q,
It affected my ethnic, faith or religious identity.	a, d, e, f, g, i, j, l, m, q,	o, r,	b, c, h, k, n, p,
I gained a better understanding of the community where I worked and greatly increased my appreciation of other cultures and learn about other ways of seeing the world.		a,	b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, j, k, l, m, n, o, p, q, r,
It increased my participation in cultural, environmental or leisure activities.		g,	a, b, c, d, e, f, h, i, j, k, l, m, n, o, p, q, r,
I get experience and it improved my chances of finding a job.		d, e, h, i, l, m, n,	a, b, c, f, g, j, k, o, p, q, r,
My expectations from EVS Project were fulfilled.	e, m, n,	c, g, h, i, j, k, l, o, q,	a, b, d, f, p, r,
Overall, I am highly satisfied with my volunteer experience so far.		e, g, h, l, m,	a, b, c, d, f, i, j, k, n, o, p, q, r,

The majority of the volunteers interviewed (78%) expressed that they have skills needed by the host organization, but 61% of them stated that just sometimes these useful skills could be transferred to the host organization and therefore 50% of them affirmed that it was not often they could make a lasting contribution neither to the organization nor to the community members, and even 27% thought that this *lasting* support is not possible.

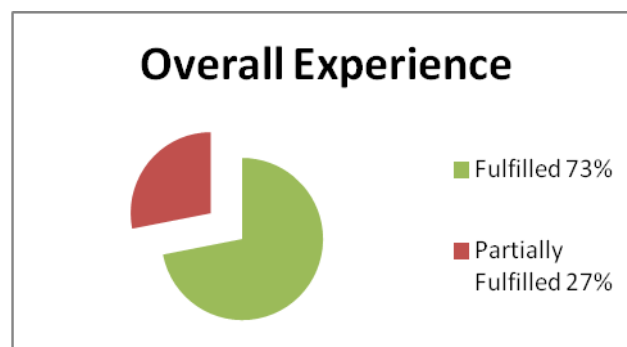
Nevertheless, some volunteers cannot transmit their knowledge. The important and positive aspect is their feeling of needed and usefulness because of which possibly more than 61% of them said that a full-time staff member could not have more effectively provided their services, and 67% of them said that only sometimes or rarely a local staff member would have been able to provide the same services. Nevertheless 33% agreed that they were highly satisfied with their volunteering experience. This percentage could be said to correspond to the group of volunteers who don't feel that their skills match their project's activities.

On the other hand, 95% of the volunteers agreed that through EVS they could gain a better understanding of the local community and greatly increase their appreciation and knowledge of other cultures and their ways of seeing the world. Similarly, they agreed that it increased their participation in cultural, environmental or leisure activities. Moreover, even though in the motivation chart "getting experience and improving the chances of finding a job" was not a priority, 61% of the youngsters agreed to this, and nobody opposed it.

The ideas pointed out in the preceding paragraph could explain statistics related with one of the main questions in this study: The fulfilment of expectations of EVS projects and the general volunteering experience. The first graph shows the percentages of expectations achieved, in which only 33% stated complete satisfaction, against a 17% who disagreed; while half of the volunteers stated that their expectations were just partially fulfilled.



These results may be a bit disappointing, but the statistics change in an optimistic way in the next diagram.



As we see for the overall experience, the level of fulfilment is very high. The totally fulfilled is 73% and the partially fulfilled 27%. These figures provide a constructive overview of the general situation of volunteers, who are optimistic about finding possible solutions because despite problems and challenges described earlier, the volunteers are please and satisfied with their experiences.

“My expectations about EVS weren’t fulfilled... there were no cultural course for us and in kindergarten we weren’t really needed..., but the expectations about Turkey and the people were fulfilled 150%. I discovered and learned too many things from this experience, even now I don’t want to leave this country...that became my country, too.” (Russian v.)

There are two more fundamental questions, which could guide us in discovering where the deficiencies of EVS Projects lie. The first one is related to the way international volunteers are managed in organizations. Only 17% of the people questions expressed their content with the performance of their organization in this field (even they didn’t propose any suggestion); whereas 83% felt dissatisfied with the way volunteers are managed. What could be done in order to improve this situation? The voices of international volunteers are expressed through the experiences and suggestions presented in the following. The dissatisfaction stems from 3 interrelated aspects:

1. The lack of staff to deal with and manage volunteers (the idea of ‘the mentor’ is in almost all cases not clearly defined or this role is developed by the coordinator):

“I suggest that we would have more people of the organization involved in managing the volunteers, as it was only one person, and we were 10 volunteers at one point. Our coordinator, who is also the mentor, is the only person connected, helping and dealing with the volunteers at our organization, he is great but only one.” (Portuguese v.)

2. Lack of communication within the organization neither with the coordinator nor with the director of

organisation (in the case it is not the same person in both roles):

“Imagine, in last 6 months here I saw head-mans of my organization for maybe 4 times. They have no idea what are we doing, where we are, etc.” (German v.).

3. No supervision neither of the volunteers nor of the organizations (by National Agency):

“I suggest more control of the volunteers...many times they feel alone...they do whatever they want...specially short terms. They came here just to have fun. With control this could be avoided and volunteers could feel they have a support” (Estonian v.).

“I think there must be much bigger control over EVS projects. There has to be someone from the NA, who comes every 2 or 3 months and talks with volunteers or asks for the list of activities, which are done. Otherwise organizations are too lazy – it is easy to write in final report everything what the N.A. wants to hear, but it is not always true. There must be a really hard control” (Latvian v.).

The second big issue is linked to the projects and activities’ connection with local priorities; and the demands and wishes of community members relating to volunteers’ services. Toward this question, statistics are very diverse and interesting: 33% agreed totally with the statement; as compared to another 33% who agreed partially; while the rest 33% agreed to disagree with it. The lines below show concrete cases:

There are some people from the first 33% who stated: “the project and activities match with local priorities, but it was nicely planned, but couldn’t be entirely effected...”

Those who provided a negative response said:

“Most of them are not a really needed by the community, they just are adapted to the organization’s requirements...” (German v.)

“Most of the projects they have now are nice, but they do not respond to urgent priorities. They wanted, they liked the activities, they were happy, but was not priority, not really need.” (Indian v.)

Partially agreed: More or less: 33%

“The local community didn’t ask for it and it wasn’t in its priorities as well. But I think that the local community welcomed the activities organised with pleasure.” (French v.)

From these quotes we could conclude that not all activities developed are needed by the community; but despite this fact, the actions implemented by the volunteers are very welcomed and agreeable to community members.

### **3.2 ANALYSIS OF HOST ORGANIZATIONS’ INPUTS**

After having presented and analysed the questionnaires and interviews of international volunteers, it is important to examine the point of view of host organizations in relation to EVS processes and their experiences with the volunteers so far.

In the paragraphs, data collected from 10 different organisations is presented and analysed, taking into consideration the information gathered not only through the questionnaires, but also in the personal interviews with directors, which took place during the visits made to all these organizations.

The general profile of the sample includes the following described aspects. In relation to the type of organization, it could be said that 60% of them are NGOs (No governmental Organization),<sup>8</sup> 30% can be termed 'Mixed organization' (NGO plus Governmental cooperation) and 10% correspond to a special 'mixed organization' between a public University and an NGO. To make this investigation more geographically representative, 6 of the organizations interviewed are located in the west of Turkey (Ankara, Istanbul and Balikesir) and 4 of them are situated in eastern cities like Gaziantep, Mardin and Batman. It is important also to mention that 4 of the organizations interviewed are considered the principle organisation in terms of volunteerism in Turkey. From the other organizations, 2 are part of the big governmental Project 'GAP' in southeast Turkey and the others have a medium or small dimension.

With reference to their field of work, 80% of the organisations address education, 60% work also with disability issues and with economically disadvantaged people, 40% said that they focus on youth, volunteering, and artistic activities. The next two tables present the previous experience of the organization.<sup>9</sup>

#### *Year of establishment*

Before 2000:	d (1999), j
2000-2004:	
2005....:	e (2006), f (2005), g (2005), h (2007), i (2006), b (2008), k (2005), c (2005)

#### *Year of beginning hosting international volunteers*

Year	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Organization		C	f	h, k	i, b, j	d, e	g	

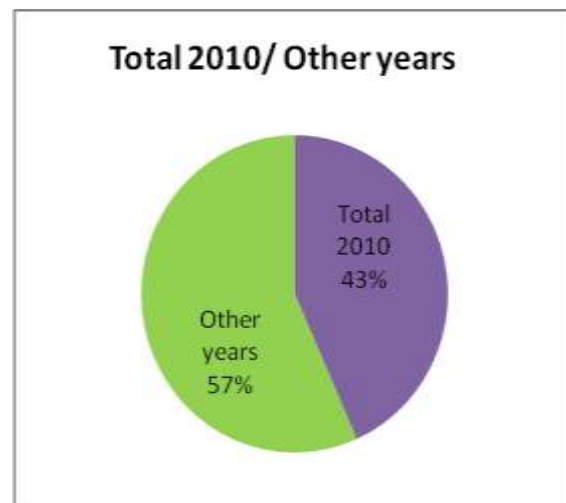
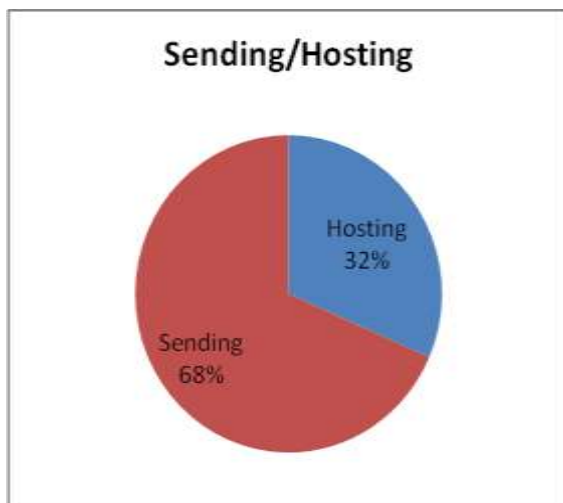
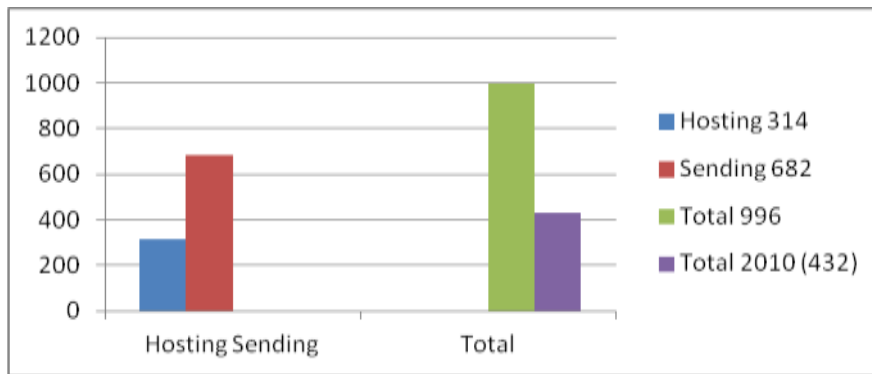
In the first chart, we identify that 80% of the organizations were established in 2005 or later. This could be a direct result of the complete integration of Turkey in the 'Youth in Action European Union Programme' after 2004. In contrast, only 2 of the 10 organizations were founded before 2000. These statistics suggest that not a very large percentage of already established volunteerism organizations, decided, applied or were approved for European Voluntary Service.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, it can be stated that 9 of 10 organizations are both hosting and sending volunteers; only 1 is just a hosting organisation. The graph below illustrates the relation to the figures and the proportions between sending and hosting volunteers; and the total general number of organisations in comparison to the volunteers sent and hosted in year 2010.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> One of them is a Turkish NGO founded and coordinated by foreigners.

<sup>9</sup> As in the analysis of international volunteers interviews, the following table and most of the graphs used in this investigation contain Latin alphabetical letters, which represent each of the 10 carried out interviews. Moreover, in order to recognize better and analyse the information, there was given a colour to each possibility answer according to the particular percentage. Thus, the colours in the charts are taken so: blue = the majority (more than 50%); orange = some (between 30%-50%); white = the minority (less than 30%).

<sup>10</sup> This subject and some suggestions for increasing the number of local volunteerism organizations involved in EVS are discussed in the Context Country Profile.

<sup>11</sup> These numbers correspond only to 9 of the organizations that were interviewed because one of the organizations did not give information in this field.



As can be taken from the graphs and in close relation with the general statistics from the country,<sup>12</sup> the number of volunteers sent is higher than those hosted. Yet, a very small percentage of Turkish youth is aware of the EVS programme. The number of volunteers hosted could be also a result of the few years since the EVS programme has started in this country, and thus the lack of experience of many of the young organizations. However, as can be observed in the graph 'Total 2010/Other years', the number of volunteers has greatly increasing, since in 2010 alone more than the 43% of the total amount of volunteers were sent and hosted when compared to previous years.

### 3.2.1 Motivation and Recruitment process

The motivation for these organizations to start hosting international volunteers is that volunteers bring 'intercultural learning' and 'international relations' to the organizations and local communities, as well as the desire to 'do something for society'. An interesting fact is that 5 out of the 10 directors stated they were themselves volunteers in the past and that this experience influenced them greatly in founding their respective organisations and hosting international volunteers.

With regard to the specific requirements and skills of volunteers, the following table specifies the data obtained. The answered numbers on the top of each statement are taken so: 1 = disagree (rarely or never), 2 = neither agree nor disagree (sometimes), 3 = agree (often), and NA = not apply. The meaning of the colours remains as in the previous charts: **blue** = the majority (more than 50%); **orange** = some (between 30%-50%); white = the minority (less than 30%).

<sup>12</sup> If we compare these figures with the general data of sending and hosting volunteers in Turkey, we see the number of organizations interviewed for this study. For further information, review the document of Context Country Profile.



In most cases, international volunteers must. . .

	(1)	(2)	(3)	NA
...have specific skills (for example, they must be qualified to provide medical care)	h,	e, f, g, i, j,	d, b, k, c,	
... have a certain level of education		d, g, h, i, b, k, c,	f,	e, j,
... be of a certain age	d, g, b, j,	i,	f, h, k, c,	e,
...be able to speak one or more local languages	f, g, i, b, j, k,	c,		e,
...complete an interview to volunteer with us		f, k, c,	e,	d, g, i, b, j,
We do not have any requirements for our international volunteers	d, e, f, g, i, b, h, j, c,			

All the organizations seem to have some kind of requirement for receiving international volunteers because they think *"...it is very important how to elect the volunteers...because not all applicants are really aware of what volunteerism means...many of them just want to come here to relax and travel"* (Org. K).

Despite the idea expressed in the above quote, the volunteer's profile is not so deeply defined. However, at least 40% explained that they should be of a certain age and have some specific skills according to the project that will be developed. On the age of volunteers, organizations stated that they prefer youngsters above 22 years because they have clearer ideas of what they want and are more flexible in terms of adapting quicker to new social and cultural environments: *"Before 23 years there are not ready to confront a different culture and a new lifestyle... people too young are not so effective and sometimes they can't get adapted easily to a new life style"* (Org. C).

Besides, 70% of the organizations' directors expressed that sometimes they place emphasis the level of education of candidates. Furthermore, the majority of organizations pointed out that they rarely or never take into consideration the ability of the volunteer to speak one or more local languages. 10% agreed that often they conduct interviews with volunteers to have more information on the applicants. However, this practice is uncommon and would actually be an efficient way of closing the gap between organizations and volunteers and a way of better understanding for both. In addition to these preferences, just 1 organization stated that it gives preference to candidates with disabilities, but 50% stated a special requirement on the part of the volunteers, i.e. the special interest or motivation to work in their particular projects: *"The motivation or interest of volunteers is the most important issue we are looking for... it is the motor that will give the power to develop the project"* (Org. H).

This profile of the volunteer includes also the volunteering period that international volunteers serve in each organization. As seen in the table below, there is almost complete agreement in relation to this topic: It is the volunteers serving from 2 to 6 months who are more common, and long-term volunteers between 6 to 12 months who are most common.

	Rarely or never	Occasionally	Almost always
Between 2 weeks and 2 months	d, e, f, g, h, i, b, j, k, c,		
2 to 6 months		e, f, i, b, j, k,	d, g, h, c,
6 to 12 months	d, g,		e, f, h, i, b, j, k, c,

Organisations prefer to host short-term volunteers because they never lose their motivation and that's why it is not so difficult to deal with them and with any problem that could arise:

"... I prefer short-term, because long-term volunteers could lose the motivations after some time" (Org. H and I).

"If I could choose I would receive just short- term volunteers. First, all volunteers should be short-term and if they and their organisation agree with each other, they should continue, if not, they should stop the service at 2 months. This could avoid some bad effects that could

happen...like loss of motivation. This would be like a right for volunteers and for hosting organizations as well. Also in relation to this, there shouldn't be a limited time for some long-term volunteers, who want to continue in the service after 1 year of work." (Org. B)

In contrast with these affirmations, the director of the organization K expressed:

"I prefer long-term because they could really develop a volunteerism service, also we are working with children and it is not good for them that volunteers are changing all the time, they will miss them and they need again a process to get adapted to new persons. Also, many short-term volunteers come here just to meet new people and travel." (Org. K)

It is obvious that a long-term volunteer needs more training, logistic efforts and supervision, but the time they spend in the host community should match with the needs of project and not according to the difficulties they can have or the loose of motivation (this is a problem that time will not solve). However, the suggestion of giving the option to volunteers of continuing or leaving the organization and vice versa after 2 months of their service could be a good way of monitoring organizations and volunteers at the same time.

### **3.2.2 Trainings / Institutional support**

In connection with this subject, 100% of organisations stated that they manage their volunteers by appointing specific staff members, who provide institutional and organize support. Not one of the organisations interviewed stated that local volunteers are in charge of international volunteers or that they are left to organize themselves.

Despite this, 30% of the organizations stated that they have only one person in charge as coordinator and mentor (and in 1 case even the director). Contrary to this, 20% of organisations stated having more than 1 person to manage volunteers, putting more emphasis on logistics and health care. Referring to the mentor, there is an agreement that can be summarised as: "...it is very hard to find a mentor, a person who has to be away from the organization, but at the same time he/she should know EVS philosophy... we cannot stop his/her inclusion in the organization..." (Org. H). Because of this, in some cases, local volunteers who assist the organization carry out the functions of the mentor. All these aspects contribute, probably, to the disagreement of volunteers in relation with the way organisations deal with and manage them, as we mentioned in the previous part of this study.

Other point that makes some volunteers expectations not totally fulfilled is related to trainings they should receive, besides Turkish lessons. In this regard, 40% of the organisations recognized that they don't offer any training, compared to 60% that claimed they do: "*There are many different courses for volunteers, most of them related with non-formal methods and intercultural learning (handicrafts, mosaics, cooking, climbing)... also teamwork building activities and trainings for trainers (non formal educations activities)*" (Org. H and I).

On the other hand, if we look at how organisations select their projects: 10% of the projects are suggested or proposed by partner organizations or by international volunteers themselves. A potential deficiency could be found, due to the high percentage (80%) of organisations that agreed that their staff members create projects based on organizations' needs (interest, main focus area, etc.). However, 70% of the organisations stated that their staff members also create projects but based on community feedback and what the community needs. The following two quotes reflects directors' opinions:

"We don't produce new projects...because we always have the same aims and goals, that is why always there are the same activities, only the volunteers change..." (Org. H).

"There is a meeting with young local people and the coordinator of the organization to determine new needs and if they are possible for us to develop, we will propose them" (Org. D).

Turkish people are passing through a process of socio-cultural changes, and especially young people, therefore maybe a project that was a useful and succeeded 4 years earlier may today not correspond

to community needs or demands. It seems to be a specific line that distinguishes two types of organisation: Those who have low performance and development in contrast to a second group that is very active, offers sufficient institutional support to their volunteers and, one of the most significant facts, includes in their projects and plans the local community perspective.

### 3.2.3 Volunteer Impact

What do you think are the *potential benefits* of hosting international volunteers?

The numbered answer on the top of each statement on the table have the same scale as previous charts presented: 1 = disagree (rarely or never), 2 = neither agree nor disagree (sometimes), 3 = agree (often), and NA = not apply. The meaning of the colours remains as always: blue = the majority (more than 50%); orange = some (between 30%-50%); white = the minority (less than 30%).

	(1)	(2)	(3)	NA
...contribute needed skills not found in local staff or volunteers		h, i, b, j, c,	d, e, f, g, k,	
...provide more people to get our work done		g, i,	e,	d, f, h, b, j, k, c,
...provide a new viewpoint or perspective			d, e, f, g, h, i, b, j, k, c,	
...provide an opportunity for local people to learn more about other nations and cultures			d, e, f, g, h, i, b, j, k, c,	
...provide an opportunity for local people to learn more about their own nations and culture		e, f, g, b, j, c,	d, h, i, k,	
...help us attract local volunteers		g, i, j, k, c,	e, f, h,	d, b,
...bring international attention to our work		e, b, j, k,	f, c,	d, g, h, i,
...bring credibility to our work		e, f,		d, g, h, i, b, j, k, c,
...are effective		d, g, h, i, b, c,	e, f, j, k,	
...help our economy by spending money locally	c,			d, e, f, g, h, i, b, j, k,
...generate revenue for our organization		e, f, g, h, i, b, j, c,	k,	d,
...become financial donors	e, k, c,			d, f, g, h, i, b, j,
...become advocate upon return home		e, f, g, h, i, b, j, c,	k,	d,
...are inexpensive	f,	e,		d, g, h, i, b, j, k, c,
... 's services could have been more effectively provided by a full-time staff member.	d, e, g, h, b, j, k, c,	f, i,		
If the person had not volunteered, a local staff member would have provided these services.	d, f, h, k,	e, g, i, b, j, c,		
...help our organisation develop the relationship with the local community		e, g, i, b,	d, f, h, j, k, c,	
...help to intensify networking efforts at national / international level		d, g, i,	e, f, h, b, j, k, c,	

From the table above, it can be observed that 100% of the organisations stated that, very often or always, volunteers provide a new viewpoint or perspective as well as an opportunity for local people to learn more about other nations and cultures. As such, self-awareness through intercultural learning emerged an important issue mentioned by the interviewed. The following quote expresses this idea:

“EVS is so great, even we have now in Turkey three volunteers who are Turkish (daughters of migrants in Germany) but they can't speak one word in Turkish...they want to recover their language and rediscover themselves and their Turkish culture... EVS is giving them this opportunity”.

The majority also stated that the benefits of hosting volunteers include: Help to the organization in developing relationships with the local community and intensifying networking efforts at national and

international levels. In addition, 80% of the organisations agreed that sometimes volunteers generate revenue and become advocates upon return home. Along the same line, between 30% - 50% of organisations agreed that sometimes volunteers contribute needed skills not found in the local staff or volunteers, provide an opportunity for local people to learn more about their own nations and culture, help attracting local volunteers and bringing international attention to their work.

In terms of the effectiveness of volunteers, 60% of the organisations agreed partially and the same percentage stated that, in some cases, a local staff member would have provided these services if the person had not volunteered. Organizations mentioned that this fact depends a lot on the own personal development of each volunteer. However, 80% of them stated that in most cases a full-time staff member could have more effectively provided volunteers' services. This percentage shows that volunteers' service is very appreciated by the organization, especially due to the benefits talked about in the first paragraph, and yet the performance of some volunteers is not maximised, as it should be.

After having reviewed the benefits of volunteers, it is also necessary to analyse the *potential challenges* related to international volunteers. The next table depicts these issues. The meaning of the scale numbers and colours remain the same as the ones used for volunteers' benefits.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	NA
...require a lot of training		e, h, b, j, c,	d, f, g, i, k,	
...require a lot of supervision, LOGISTIC	e,		d, f, g, h, i, b, j, k, c,	
...distract staff and local volunteers from the work	d, e, f, g, h, i, b, j, k, c,			
...are accustomed to different ways of doing things	e,	k, c,	d, f, g, h, i, b, j,	
...are not always welcome in our community	d, e, f, g, h, i, b, j, k, c,			
...may not have the skills needed	e, g, h, i, b, j, k,	c,	f,	
...may not have the language abilities needed		h, k,	d, e, f, g, i, b, j, c,	
...don't stay long enough	d, e, f, g, h, i, b, j, c,		k,	
...can be difficult to find	e, f, d, g, h, i, b, j, k, c,			
...take the place of local volunteers	e, g, h, i, b, j, k, c,			d, f,
...take the place of local jobs	e, g, h, i, b, j, k, c,			d, f,
...are not effective	e, f, d, g, h, i, b, j, k,	c,		
...are expensive	e, f, d, h, i,			g, b, j, k, c,
...create problems inside the community	e, g, h, i, b, j, k, c,			d, f,

The main challenges for organizations hosting international volunteers are: The requirement of lot of supervision/logistics (90%), the probable lack of language abilities needed (80%), the different ways of doing things (70%) and the number of trainings they require (50%). It is very important also to add the *dealing of cultural differences* that were mentioned by 50% of the organisations, which could comprise in the first and third challenge mentioned. This fact could be a result of the diverse way of life and socio-cultural perceptions existing in Turkey and all the aspects that this country represents for Europe, considering that almost all its population is Muslim and it is the door to the Middle East.

### 3.3 ANALYSIS OF HOST COMMUNITIES' INPUTS

This study has already discussed the perspective of volunteers and host organizations in terms of many different topics related with the whole European Voluntary Service experience. But what is the general opinion and perception of international volunteerism on the part of community members? Is the local community aware of these projects? Do Turkish people think they having an effect on their

society? The subsequent charts bring together the information collected through personal interviews and questionnaires in order to answer these questions.

Local community members interviewed include 9 persons between 25 and 40 years living in west Turkey. These people are not part of *host families* because generally volunteers in Turkey share an apartment or a house with other volunteers. Therefore, this sample includes people who are somehow part of the projects and volunteers' activities or just share with them a common environment.

### 3.3.1 Community Engagement

From all interviewed people, 100% stated that they know volunteers and have had different and interesting experiences with them. However, 3 out of the 9 community members said that they met volunteers just few months before when they decided to take part in this precise project. This situation shows the lack of perception in general around Turkey as Turkish people have a different conception of volunteerism closely related to religion and tradition.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, neither the meaning given to this word, nor the concrete activities that volunteers carry out are clear, especially in 3 interviewed people. Also, in few cases they are just identified as *foreigners* and even related to religions missionaries:

“Before I never knew about (formal) volunteerism here in Balikesir, well in Istanbul once I just heard they come to Turkey from America (USA), but I don't know if they are volunteers or what they do...” (Kindergarten's teacher).

“From Balikesir no, from Adana (bigger city) but this is the first I know about volunteers. Erasmus is very famous but volunteers no... What volunteers can do? I don't know exactly, maybe they just came here to learn language” (Primary School Teacher)”.

Although the idea mentioned before, by another 6 persons, volunteerism is linked with sharing, intercultural learning, helping and cooperation. The following passages refer to an interesting significance that people give to this term:

“In the world: everybody needs each other... volunteerism it is like an interchange, like a chain's rings...” (Sociologist).

“Volunteerism is sharing and getting to know new cultures, and seeing the world through other people's eyes (Photographer).

In addition, some of the interviewed stated that more and more Turkish people are becoming aware of volunteerism in the last 4 years due to the increase, improvement and growth of the organizations working on this subject.

In terms of the motivations or the reasons why local members think volunteers were hosted in their communities, most of them (7/9) connected the answer with the opportunity of offering intercultural knowledge and learning to the different members in Turkish community:

“I want the children to grow up understanding that life has many aspects, possibilities, opportunities...volunteers are very important...it is an opportunity for being social active with them... dancing, sharing...” (Teacher of children with disabilities).

These answers are totally interconnected with the activities that people think correspond to volunteers. Thus, with respect to the question whether local community members know what international volunteers are doing in their community, 6 people answer in the positive, giving answers such as this one:

“They take part in social activities, hold courses and activities according to their abilities and professions. E.g.: If the volunteer is a diver, s/he can teach swimming to the disabled kids at

<sup>13</sup> For further information, review the document of Context Country Profile.

schools. And also they are representative of their countries in terms of sharing their life styles, cultures with us” (Photographer).

From this comment we can understand that the perception of being a volunteer is more related to society or local community’s adaptation to the skills of the volunteers, than vice verse.

The next table shows the data collected in the field of the ‘Community engagement and volunteer impact’. As it can be seen, the majority of local members interviewed, said they were very interested in getting to know volunteers, and agreed that very often these youngsters try to find the time to make a positive difference in their community. These initial statements are also supported by the fact that they often speak with the volunteers about their experiences. It can thus be concluded that international volunteers’ performance is recognized positively and appreciated by the Turkish community.

The used scale: **1** = disagree (rarely or never), **2** = neither agree nor disagree (occasionally), and **3** = agree (very often),

	Disagree (1)	(2)	(3)
I / we am very interested in getting to know the volunteers.		b, g,	a, c, d, e, f, h, i
I / we feel they have the ability to make a difference in my community.		b, c, e, g, i,	a, d, f, h,
They try to find the time to make a positive difference in my / our community.			a, b, c, d, e, f, h, i
I / we speak with the volunteers about their experiences.	b,	f,	a, c, d, e, g, h, i
I / we have read a journal or blog from the volunteers about my experiences.	b, f, g, h, d, c, i		a, e,
The volunteers are always part of community activities		a, e, f, g, h,	b, c, d, i

However, the interviewed affirmed that only sometimes they feel that volunteers have the ability to make a difference in the community. Thus, 6 out of 9 community members stated that volunteers can help improve things in the community or contribute to ‘development’ due to several reasons like: Breaking of stereotypes, connecting cultures and countries; intercultural learning and cultural-knowledge exchange:

“Yes, they can. First of all, they can be good examples for people to be also volunteers and take part in these kinds of projects. Next, they can be effective in language development and cultural sharing... She was very helpful...I have seen the nice effects she brought through the children dancing improvement and knowledge” (English teacher).

Finally, the table shows that the majority of the community members didn’t read any journal or blog from the volunteers about their experiences. This situation shows that even though most of the volunteers express themselves through this media, the local community does not access this information.



### 3.3.2 Volunteer Impact

What do you think are the *potential benefits* of hosting international volunteers?

	disagree (1)	(2)	agree (3)
...contribute needed skills not found in local staff or volunteers		a, d, e,	b, c, f, g, h, i
...provide more people to get our work done	a, c, d, e, f, g, h,		b, i
...provide a new viewpoint or perspective			a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i
...provide an opportunity for local people to learn more about other nations and cultures			a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i
...provide an opportunity for local people to learn more about their own nations and culture	c, e, f,	a, b, d, h, i	g,
...help us attract local volunteers	a, b, d, g, h,	c, e, f, i	
...bring international attention to our community	a, e, f, g, h,	b, c, d, i	
...are effective		a, b, e, h,	c, d, f, g, i
...help our economy by spending money locally	a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h,	i	
...generate revenue for our community	a,	b,	c, d, e, f, g, h, i
...become financial donors	a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i		
...become advocates upon return home		a, b, c, e, i	d, f, g, h,
...are inexpensive	a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h,	i	
... 's services could have been more effectively provided by a full-time staff member.	a, b, c, d, f, g, h,	e, i	
If the person had not volunteered, a local staff member would have provided these services.	a, c, d, f, h, i	b, e, g,	

As seen in the above table, the biggest benefits that local people (9/9) think international volunteers bring to their communities are: New points of view or perspectives and the opportunity to learn more about other nations and cultures; followed by the contribution of needed skills (6/9) and the generation of revenue for the community (7/9).

In addition, most of those interviewed partially agreed that volunteers provide an opportunity to local people to learn more about their own nation and culture, help attracting local volunteers and bring international attention to the community. On the other hand, talking about the effectiveness of volunteers and the fact that they become advocates upon returning home, interviewed people mentioned that these statements could only be achieved sometimes, depending of the development of each volunteer. In contrast, local community members stated that never or on just a few occasions, volunteers help the economy by spending money locally and become financial donors. They also expressed that a full-time staff member cannot provide volunteers' services in most cases because the level of acceptance of the volunteers by Turkish community is very high.

What do you think are the *potential challenges* of hosting international volunteers?

	disagree (1)	(2)	agree (3)
...are accustomed to different ways of doing things		f,	a, b, c, d, e, g, h, i
...are not always welcome in our community	a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i		
...may not have the skills needed	a, b, c, d, f, g, i	e,	h,
...may not have the language abilities needed	l	g, h,	a, b, c, d, e, f,
...don't stay long enough	b,	a, d, h, e,	c, f, g, i
...can be difficult to find	a, b, c, d, e, h,	l	f, g,
...take the place of local volunteers	a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h,	l	
...take the place of local jobs	a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h,	l	
...are not effective	a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i		
...are expensive	a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i		
...create problems inside the community	a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i		
...take advantage of their status to travel around	b, f, g, h, i	a, c, d,	e,
...are not interested in the community	a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i		
... are difficult to communicate and interact with.	a, d, e, g, h, i	b, c, f,	

Finally, as it can be seen from the chart above, there are two challenges from community's perspective in terms of hosting international volunteers: The different ways of doing things than those they are accustomed to and the likely lack of language abilities. The rest of the statements do not pose a challenge for community members due to the good relationship they develop with the volunteers and the interest they show not only in learning about them but also the exchange with volunteers on their respective cultures.

## 4 Conclusions and Suggestions

The positive impact of volunteering on society is uncountable: Social contribution, intercultural learning competences, personal development (self-awareness, self-confidence, dealing difficulties, being independent), social/team work abilities and breaking cultural prejudices. Considering especially the last point, in Turkey, volunteerism could destroy *taboos* of both groups, Turkish people's conception about *foreigners*<sup>14</sup>, and in European stereotypes about *eastern* and *Islamic* countries. This fact helps improving a better cultural understanding and relationship between nations.

It seems to be a specific line that distinguishes two kinds of organisations: Those who have low performance or development, in contrast with a second group that is very active, offers institutional support to their volunteers and, one of the most significant fact, includes the local community perspective in their projects and plans.

The lack of activities, the feeling of being unneeded, and the way of managing volunteers are the biggest challenges from the perspective of international volunteers. To improve this situation, several changes should be made like increasing the monitoring of organizations. The National Agency's presence should be felt not only when there is a crisis; visits should be undertaken including personal interviews with the volunteers. In addition, more attention should be given to the suggestions in the final report of the volunteers' EVS experiences. A way for providing more detailed information about activities developed in the organization, as well as for monitoring the performance of the volunteers and the organization could be a *common virtual database* obligatory for all the organizations, where ex-volunteers can publish their comments and lived experiences (a kind of *facebook*). Additionally, the National Agency should check the compatibility between the projects and the activities, in accordance with the resources, possibilities of the environment and organisation, and local community needs.

<sup>14</sup> In Turkish foreigner is translated to *yabancı*, word that has two meanings at the same time: people from outside the country and *estranger* (enemy). Maybe this fact responds to historical not good relationships with foreign countries.

Furthermore, volunteers need a particular person (besides the coordinator or the director of the organization) who supports them (the figure and profile of the *mentor* should be changed because it does not work properly), trainings should improve (especially in relation with language and culture), progress of volunteers should be monitored more closely and there should be regular meetings, planning and self-reflective actions. The last issue includes also local community members, improving through these initiatives communication between organizations-volunteers-local community.

Volunteers' service are very appreciated by the organization and the local community, especially due to its international learning benefits, but despite this fact the performance of some volunteers is not as positive as it should be. The answer could lie in the way *volunteering* is understood. An aspect that is *missing* in the Turkish conception of formal volunteering is words like *benefits, receiving or intercultural learning*, which should be added to this perception. On the other hand, nowadays, in some cases, it seems that the European definition of this term has forgotten the part of *giving and social service*, stressing too much on elements such as *receiving, itinerant experience and personal improvements* that comprise volunteerism. An equilibrium, which contains the word *sharing* and goes beyond a European patriotism or paternalist<sup>15</sup> should be established again in order to make expectations and motivations of volunteers closer to reality while developing effective activities and proposing new projects. Therefore, organizations should place more emphasis on the way they choose volunteers, previous interviews 'on skype' or *online* tests.

Other concrete suggestions are also important such as: Making the process of getting involved in EVS easier by providing more training and support to local volunteering organizations; participating in volunteering programs for at least two months to achieve an impact on the local community, and adapting or creating new activities during the summer and in accordance with school holidays and weather conditions.

International volunteering could be a very valuable and wealthy experience, but it depends on organizations' and volunteers' performances, and especially on the compatibility between the perceptions related to volunteerism, objectives and *driving forces* that are expected from the actors mentioned above and the local community.

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<sup>15</sup> For more detailed information about European motivations and meanings related to the word volunteerism, review the document *Volunteerism in 1 word*.