



Worlds of Experience

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Role of intercultural communication in volunteering

Dear friends,

Every encounter can be said to be an intercultural experience. This is particularly true of interactions taking place during international volunteering because volunteers need to experience their host culture more deeply and interact with its people more closely in order to integrate into their host communities. Or they simply desire to learn about cultures and people. International volunteering therefore has the potential to foster intercultural competences or "the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (Deardorff, 2008: 33). Although volunteering programmes vary widely in terms of structure and conditions, most claim that volunteering increases intercultural competence. In the 45th issue of the ICYE Newsletter, we focus on the *Role of Intercultural Communication in Volunteering*.

In **Volunteers Voices**, we present articles from 9 young people currently volunteering in Colombia, Denmark, Germany, India, Russia, Taiwan and Switzerland, who describe the perils and misunderstandings of intercultural communication, as well as its oftentimes funny side. As a volunteer from Germany in Colombia suggests, the best way to practice intercultural communication "is to listen, to observe, and to get to know the country. To get answers, we have to ask questions. In my opinion, interest is also a signal of respect, which is the base of any intercultural action". The common denominator in these narrations is the awareness of personal growth, skills and competences gained through the exchange.

ICYE News feature: the International Training for Trainers of the Erasmus+ Key Action 2 project "Skills and Competences for a Global World", Bali, Indonesia; the kick-off meeting of the Erasmus+ Key Action 2 project "Enter Digital Era" hosted by ICYE Colombia; ICYE Taiwan's workshop for volunteers on the Taiwan Lunar New Year; and the midterm and final evaluation Seminar for long-term volunteers in Vietnam;

News from Int'l Organizations feature: the UNESCO study "Youth and Violent Extremism on Social Media – Mapping the Research" and a short update on the development of the European Solidarity Corps.

News from NGOs report on: the "Joint Declaration on Climate-Induced Displacement"; CIVICUS State of Civil Society Report 2018; "WYRED - netWorked Youth Research for Empowerment in Digital Society" by Youth for Exchange and Understanding (YEU); and a Youth Toolkit on the UN Security Council adopted resolution 2250 on the first ever thematic resolution on Youth, Peace and Security.

Wishing you an interesting reading, we look forward to receiving articles and pictures for the next issue of "Worlds of Experience", dedicated to "**Making a difference: from conservation and health care to art, culture and education**". Please send your contributions to icye@icye.org, before 31 May 2018.

Warmest regards!

ICYE International Office

This and previous issues of "Worlds of Experience" can be viewed and downloaded from: www.icye.org.

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Have you had your lunch? What living in India taught me about the importance of intercultural communication!

Anna Malaya (Germany)
Volunteer in India

There's not a cloud in the deep blue sky on this pleasant and sunny spring day in Chintamani, the Indian small town I get to call my home for one year. School has just finished and I am walking down Tank Bund Road to get a coffee from my favourite Chaiwalla, just five minutes from our apartment. As always, the street is bustling with people going about their daily chores, autos and bikes driving by and leaving behind clouds of dust and a faint smell of gas, students of all ages coming home from class, laughing and talking with their friends, excited about the free afternoon ahead.

As I pass the brightly coloured buildings and the abundance of small shops selling mostly everything you could need in your day-to-day life, I spot a familiar face on the other side of the road: The owner of the shop where I often buy biscuits or bananas is standing behind his counter, waving and smiling at me. I wave back and he motions with his fingers to his mouth, signalling a gesture of eating. I smile and softly shake my head from side to side – the Indian version of nodding, not to be confused with shaking your head “no”.

Then I point at him and repeat his motion towards the mouth, to which he also wiggles his head a bit. One last smile and I move along towards my much needed coffee, while he shifts his attention to a newly arrived customer. I chuckle a bit, thinking about how our little silent exchange took place in a matter of mere seconds, yet it contained an entire “conversation”: “Have you had your lunch?” “Yes I have what about you?” “Yes, me too.” A few months ago, seeing two people greet each other in this way in the streets of my home country, Germany, probably would've made me shake my head a bit in wonder.

Today, this little habit has become as much a part of my every-day-life as brushing my teeth or going to sleep. I have to admit, the first few days after my arrival in Chintamani, I was slightly confused as to why people kept asking me repeatedly if I had already eaten – it was not exactly a question I was used to being asked, much less so frequently.

Fairly quickly however it became evident that “Have you had your breakfast/lunch/dinner..?” is the equivalent of perhaps a “How are you?” in Germany, a polite way to start a conversation and of showing you care about the other person's well-being. And although it took me a little



while to start asking people about their food myself, I have quite grown to appreciate this way of greeting each other, because let's be honest: No one ever has an earnest answer to the question “How are you?” anyway and talking about food, to me, certainly seems nicer than talking about the weather for instance.

This is just one small example of how living in a different country and culture influences the way we interact with others and how important it is for us as volunteers, in order to fully immerse ourselves in our host-communities, to keep an open mind about new habits and ways of communicating with the people around us. Be it due to language barriers or due to cultural differences, we often find ourselves in situations in which we have to adapt and be aware that we can't just act the exact same way as at home and still be fully understood.

This is where successful intercultural communication is key, and why it is such an important skill, which I think most, if not all, volunteers manage to attain and improve a lot upon in their time abroad. If done right, intercultural communication can help both sides broaden their understanding and appreciation of each other, it can lead to a more open-minded outlook based on love and respect.

It can form beautiful and lasting relationships and simply make us grow a little closer as humans in this world that we all call our home. I for one am very thankful for the lessons I've learned in India about exactly that, the experiences I've made and the people I've met. And who knows – I might start asking people if they have eaten back in Germany too.

Building Bridges between Cultures

Katherine Gutiérrez (Honduras)

Volunteer in Taiwan

My name is Katherine Gutiérrez, I am 28 years old now, I am from Honduras, Central America. And I have been sharing my time and experiences with wonderful people in one Foundation here in Tainan City for almost 7 months. The experiences have been different since the beginning, both cultures are different also, but at the same time, I discovered that both share many things. The first and the most difficult experience for me was the language, it is a complete challenge, because you need to communicate with others, and it is not easy to even translate Chinese in your own digital adviser. But the need to communicate makes you use your body language and you became an expert at it after a few weeks.



Taiwanese culture and mine share many things; for example, the families are very close to each other. Both are talkative and love to tell stories, so I feel at home and welcome all the time in the places that I been working and living. Of course there are big differences in customs and religion but kindness is the same in both, so I feel comfortable all the times.

Of course sometimes sadness appears; I miss my home, family, friends, boyfriend, food, etc., but as a volunteer you must love to work for others and feel satisfied with the only fact of sharing and work well done. Suddenly the sadness became happiness and satisfaction. Every day is a new experience and a challenge so every day I need to be open-minded and learn about this place and myself.

The people know when you work with happiness, love and hope of a better world even if they cannot understand your language, so I think that's the key to living and working as volunteer in other country, those skills open doors and help you to be happy every day in

your work place. A real smile always opens doors no matter where.

The most important thing as a volunteer, is to share with joy and good will because the volunteer shares time, life experiences, knowledge, and many other things, but at the same time the volunteer needs something in return: gratitude.

To receive gratitude sometimes, it needs to be learnt every day, because every day you are a different person. And finally no matter how I feel, or how my day was, I always come back home after work, feel satisfied and happy because I did my best, I tried my best, and I know that my family and friends are waiting for me in my country, and for sure they are proud of me and I feel proud of myself every day. So gratitude is the big learning.

The process of learning intercultural communication

Emma Huy (Germany)

Volunteer in Colombia

Recently we went to a village of the indigenous tribe Kogi at the northern coast of Colombia. The majority of the members of the tourist group were Europeans such as a woman, who was willing to help the children in Colombia. Therefore, she brought some pens and blocks from her home country to donate them to the children. Unfortunately, she noticed later on that the language of the indigenous people is neither a written language nor do the children get a formal education in school. Although the intention of this woman was honourable, her deed did not accomplish anything. Maybe if she was given the chance to communicate with the people of the village, she would have known better what to do for them to improve their situation.



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According to me, intercultural communication is essential in every voluntary situation, since it is necessary to get in touch with the local population to get or exchange information about foreign cultures or countries. Moreover, at least in your host family or your project you are forced to make use of your intercultural skills to get yourself and the people around you in a comfortable situation where the needs and desires of everyone are respected.

Finally, volunteers need intercultural communication to resolve misunderstandings or further to avoid conflicts. Obviously the skills of this kind of communication are not inherited but have to be learned in a longer process. From my point of view, I would say that every volunteer has to start learning this thing like a child does, listening and observing its parents or siblings. Besides the different language, one has to get to know so much about the different customs of politeness that you need a lot of patience and tolerance with yourself, because sometimes you might have the feeling, that your behavior is not polite but rude. Nevertheless, you have to show courage and curiosity to ask more questions, if your attempt to communicate was a failure.

Improving our skills in intercultural communication, we learn a lot of useful qualities for our lives such as sensibility, empathy, a change of perspectives and the ignorance of some stereotypes we might have about people from other cultures. The most important thing is that we value more the individuality of every human living on our planet and that it is nearly impossible to categorize groups of persons for what they are. Hence, it is necessary to face each person to find out about their story or even what they need if you come with the intention to help like the European woman did. Maybe the best way to practice intercultural communication for a volunteer is to listen, to observe, and to get to know the country. To get answers, we have to ask questions. In my opinion, interest is also a signal of respect, which is the base of any intercultural action.

Living around the river Elbe

Cristian Ortiz (Colombia)
Volunteer in Germany

After a sad farewell, 16 hours in the air and the best camp I ever had, I arrived in the city of bridges. It was September, so there was still some summer heat. My heart and my mind were shocked by my first contact with that beautiful city, especially when I arrived at my station, the really well known "Landungsbrücken". I have never seen such a beauty gathered in one place. The Elbe river in front of me with a big cruise in the middle, the sun a few hours of hiding in sunset to my right, a long and modern port at my left and my home right behind me. I

had the fortune of calling "home" the biggest and most recognized hostel in Hamburg. It's called "Auf dem Stintfang".

At the beginning it was tough. I took some German classes in my home country Colombia, but when I arrived in Germany, I realized that I could not understand a word - my first week wasn't the best one. Everybody in the hostel talked to me in German during my work schedule and after my 8 hours of work it was difficult for me to relate to people.



That changed in the second week, when I met the person who became my brother in my year in Germany. His name was Ernesto and he worked as a barman in the hostel. He introduced me to German culture and many people during my year. With him it was much easier for me to get in touch with the other workers in the hostel. And everything went better.

Working in the hostel was interesting. Of course, it was a lot of hard work, like washing the dishes under time pressure, organizing all the supplies that arrived at the hostel, cleaning the entrance of the hostel and the terrace, taking out and moving the beds from one room to another, pulling chairs up and down in the lobby and bar so that the floor can be cleaned easily, and other activities. But time goes fast, and for me it was very enriching to feel that day by day I improved my German and I understood more of the German culture.

When I finished my work schedule, I usually went out to know more about the city. I marveled at everything that Hamburg has to offer: the "Reeperbahn" and its illuminated streets with neon signs everywhere, crazy techno parties, German beer and happy people at "Jungfernstieg", and its luxury stores, cars and fancy lifestyle. I went to "Alster river" and its beautiful views, mansions and small boats, the hippie streets with lots of cool places and "Sternschanze", the long and green roads of the "Botanische Garten" and all that a "Hafen" can offer, German food, water, amazing views and history.

Living as a volunteer in Hamburg broke those stereotypes that normally people have about Germans. Cold? Probably just the weather, as Germans are very friendly and nice. They have that empathy that teaches you with time that a German friend is a friend for a lifetime, no matter the distance, age or the social level.

Without knowing it, having made the decision to live this experience changed my life. The fact of having lived alone, of having known so many cultures, of having worked in another country and of having learned another language made me a better version of me - with more self-confidence, determination, visions, empathy and most important, good vibes.

How sitting at a table can create cultural misunderstandings

Carolina Bonsignori (Italy)

EVS Volunteer in Denmark

When I arrived in Rejsby in South Jutland, I had no idea about the cultural differences between Italy and Denmark. The only thing that I was told was that the Danes like to spend time at home and that they're not as much outgoing as other Europeans. The teacher with whom I had done my interview told me that they liked to go home after work, light some candles have a cup of a warm drink and stay together with their families. Not so much later, I discovered that this attitude was described by a Danish term, which is impossible to translate: *hygge*. "Hygge" can be a moment or a place, something related to cosiness, tranquillity, and relaxation.

It didn't take too much time before I started to realise the many differences in the way of living of the two countries. First of all, the daily routine, which sees the Danes having dinner at 18:00, when in Italy it is time for an *aperitivo*, whereas dinner takes place between 19:30 and 21:30, according to where in Italy one lives.



Secondly, human interactions: although the teachers of the school where I work have been very kind since the very first moment, the Danes are much more reserved than the Italians, and they have a different way of greeting each other.

I would walk around the school saying hello to everyone if it was the first time that I met them that day, but I soon realised that you don't really need to greet someone that walks past you if you are not interested in starting a conversation. Another thing that I noticed, and that made me and my colleagues laugh about cultural differences, is how differently we behave when we're sitting together with other people and decide to leave the table. In Italy, we would spontaneously wait until everyone leaves the table, or else tell everyone why we are leaving earlier.

This means telling everyone else: "I have to finish my work" or "I am going to the toilet", which the Danes find irrelevant, obvious, or, in the last case, amusingly weird. Why should they care if you need to do private things? Well, in Italy it's just a polite way to tell the others that you don't want to be rude leaving on your own.

Intercultural interaction is made up of many different, small things like this. We could compare culture to the rules of a game: we are all playing, all the time, but when we move out of our country we meet people playing according to other rules, and we might not even realise it. This is something very important that I learnt during my training as an EVS volunteer. Cultural misunderstandings can happen all the time, without the people involved being aware of it. To go back to the example of the people sitting at the same table, it's easy to imagine what happens if a Dane and an Italian are sitting together and the Dane decides to leave without saying anything. The Italian is likely to feel offended or think that the other person doesn't like him/her. But neither the Dane nor the

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Italian can understand what's going on between them if they don't talk to and compare with each other.

This whole anecdote serves as an example of intercultural misunderstanding, which can always happen because we are used to seeing the world "through the lenses of our own glasses", and working according to our own rules. Going through these small events in our everyday life can teach us to weigh more cultural differences and to better understand our own culture. There's a continuous process of becoming more aware of the self and the other in every single moment we spend with someone coming from a different background and environment.

My Half Year of Volunteering in Switzerland

Yu-Ping Wang (Taiwan)
Volunteer in Switzerland

So now I am officially halfway through my year with the ICYE's volunteer program. I work as a teaching assistant in different classes with children aged 6-14 at School Uznach. The good thing to volunteer in a small town like Uznach is that it also allows me to observe Swiss culture more closely. Not only is it a fresh experience for me, it is also their first time a volunteer was introduced in the school. What I've encountered is entirely my firsthand account in this country.

My way to go around in Switzerland is taking public transportation, and I like how almost ubiquitous it is



here. Many Swiss use it for daily purposes or vacations. It is relatively safe and on time compared to some countries I've been to, to the point that I can just leave my bag on the seat and go to use the restroom that I don't need to worry if someone will steal it. Whenever I have a chance, I jump on a train heading to different places. Every town can be similar, nonetheless they are unique - whether by

way of the mountain, hills, lakes, rivers, or monuments. Since this country hasn't been in a war for two hundred years, the majority of the lands and historical buildings are well preserved, which is what Switzerland is well known for.

Eye contact, a courtesy Swiss are taught since they were young. It is normal to look into someone's eyes when we talk or listen to someone, you may think. I know that avoid eye contact in certain times may be considered rude, but I believe they take "eye contact" to another level. Class begins with greeting by students shaking hands and making eye contact with the teacher one by one; they do so after class as well. Before I came to Switzerland, I was not aware of how unaccustomed I was at making eye contact or shaking hands. Another Swiss etiquette is "three kisses on the cheek" between acquaintances. Its intimacy is something I still find hard to adapt to although I have no problem giving someone a hug. Yet kissing on the cheek is way more affectionate from my perspective.

Interestingly, despite the aforementioned discoveries, I had found myself in solitude a lot for the first few months because of the language barrier. It doesn't matter, I was told before not to have too much expectation for a Swiss welcome with open arms. And even though I'm proud of my English, this did not give me an advantage to socialize with them earlier. The fact is that at my workplace, the teachers probably can speak better English than I do, however they do not have the habit or predisposition to speaking in English. Plus my knowledge of German was zero. Very often, when I was in the teacher's lounge, I stayed quiet for I kept having the idea that I shouldn't speak English as it would seem impolite. At a certain point I started to doubt my intention to be here. This kind of emotional letdown did not go away for a while.

While wiring this article, I was thinking about what exactly I could conclude about my life so far in this hospitable yet self-restrained country. I'm discovering a bit of Switzerland, also my weaknesses and strengths each day. And I'm looking forward to sharing with you all my stories after this one year volunteering program.

Me as a part time Indian girl

Lea Sophie Bauer (Germany)
Volunteer in India

From the first minute I arrived in India, which was already 7 months ago, it has been an adventure, and I've been totally overwhelmed by all the differences in lifestyle and behaviour. I felt and still feel that everything in the everyday life follows a rhythm, which has been completely new to me and not always easy to get used to, but because of these reasons it's also the most interesting and instructive time abroad for me so far.



Before I really start writing about the challenges of my voluntary service and the cultural differences, I want to give a short overview about my work in India. I am a volunteer in Mysore, living in a host family, in a really calm and nice living area of the city and working in a school for children with special needs. But this is not the first project I've worked in. Before I changed to the school, about one month ago, I volunteered in a home for girls and also lived together with them.

My change of project should not be the centre of attention in this article, but I think it's important for you to know, that I've been the new volunteer in a project once again and that I had to find my place at a new work once again. I don't want to talk only about obvious and popular differences in the culture right now, like typical clichés about the chaotic traffic here (which is unfortunately true).

It starts already with a lot of small things, like how people express their feelings and react to persons they know or they don't know. I experienced it many times, for example, that people I met in Mysore or while travelling had been very open and sociable to me although they didn't know me at all. Some helped me out in a situation in which I had a problem or warmly invited me to their house just because we had a nice chat in the bus.

One very nice woman for example welcomed me to her house because I had to get ready for a wedding and didn't know how to tie my saree by myself. So she

dressed me up and even gave me one of her Bindis and she made me so happy with that gesture. And that was something that I had to learn in the beginning, to just take the offer and not to be scared of their way to be touchy-feely. I also realised that family matters a lot to a majority of people here in India. I don't want to say that family means nothing in Germany or is unimportant, but still I can see a difference in spending time with the family.

Moreover I noticed that some of the teachers or children I'm working with or I used to work with have a different manner of handling conflicts. That means, that I've been in situations, in which I sensed that somebody wants to tell me that I should change something in my behaviour or the way I'm doing exercises, etc. and important now is, that I could sense it, but many times I've not been actually told to change something. That's really an interesting contrast to the manner many persons get in contact with strangers.

While they can be very curious and indiscreet, asking you directly questions about your private life, they can be even overpolite in speaking about conflicts. But that's only the way some persons have been reacting to me.

Until now I can reflect on myself that during my time in India I realised some details about my personality and my character, which are making me different from the locals and maybe making me even German, who knows, but also, that those aspects can change, while spending time abroad and I'm so glad about that. For me, it's so funny that I started already a little to wiggle with my head as an answer to question, like many Indians are doing.

Let's see what's going to happen in the coming 4,5 months and I'm very excited how I'm going to change and how the people around me are going to change! Namaskara and take care!

I Lost a Piece of My Heart in Germany

Zelfani Ramadhan (Indonesia)

Volunteer in Germany

Guten Tag alle zusammen! My name is Fani and I am from Indonesia, here I would like to tell my year exchange story in Germany. Honestly a lot of bad things came out to my mind before I arrived in Berlin, I was so nervous about the country, scared of the people, sad to be alone and to leave my family and friends. But then it changed when I met ICJA's staff who so welcomed me such as a new family. And I met a lot of new friends from all over the world. It was so nice and we got culture exchange as well.

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Then I moved to a city named Stuttgart. My life started here: to live, to adapt to what my new family eat, and to work with strangers.

My new family is vegetarian, whereas I could not live without chicken and my family in Indonesia were worried about me living with vegetarians. It was also the first in my whole life to know, meet and live with vegetarians. My two first months were totally hard.

I bought Kebab secretly and ate a lot of chicken in my project. The third month, fourth month went by and I recognized that I could follow their habit. I did not eat any meat for 2 months and it was okay. Moreover I got to know a lot of delicious vegetarian food and introduced them to some vegetarian Indonesian food. No word can describe my family members but perfect!



The mother became my friend to share my days with and guide me to some beautiful places in every part of Stuttgart; the father also became the vitamin when I felt tired after work and replaced my tiredness with laughter instead, and it is so nice to meet the children in town.

My project was in Jugendfarm Freiberg/Rot Stuttgart, with 15 rabbits and pig guineas, 3 goats, 3 sheep, 12 chickens, 2 dongkeys and 6 ponys.. It is a place for children to learn how to take care of animals. I helped the children (aged between 7 and 16 years) when they cleaned the cages, fed the animals, did something in the office or cooked with and for the children. It was so hard to communicate in the first month, to know how to approach the children and the things were so different to what I was used to do in Indonesia.

The language classes helped me so much and I could speak with them after that. I worked, played, ran, ate and learned everything with them. Sometimes they were curious about which country I am from, then one day I made a presentation for the children about Indonesia. And I cooked some Indonesian food for them as well.

It was also really good for me to travel to other European countries and I was refreshed for work. And when my year exchange came to an end, I really felt that I became a new Fani through the one year. I met, learned and experienced thousands of things that I will never forget and I will keep with me in my country. Because of this program, I know the Earth is huge, we are different, healthy life is important and I know myself better. I was glad to see my family know how to cook some vegetarian Indonesian food by themselves, and the children said they would miss my food and one of them even promised to meet me again in 6 years in Indonesia. It made me sad and happy at the same time.

All that I did in my project through the one year might not have a big effect on the farm, but I tried my best and I'm sure the children will remember me one day. Thank you to ICJA and Dejavato, the organizations which made this possible, and made me lose a piece of my heart in Germany. For sure I will come back to Germany, especially Stuttgart, and meet them again before I die! Greetings from always summer Indonesia.

БУДЬТЕ КАК ДОМА! - One year in Russia!

Theresa Helbing (Germany)
Volunteer in Russia

Alright school is finished. Exams are passed and what to do now? I guess we all had this situation already, maybe not after school, but any time in life. If you're interested in a foreign country, in its culture and language and you want to make lots of new experiences, I have a great idea for you: THE EUROPEAN VOLUNTARY SERVICE!

My name is Theresa, I'm 19 years old and I'm from Germany. I decided to do my EVS in Russia and I've been in Samara now for 6 months. With around 1 million inhabitants, Samara is the 6th biggest city of Russia and it's located on the river Volga. I wanted to do my voluntary service anywhere in this huge country because I'm very interested in Russian language and society. I like the idea, that you can help in a project you're interested in and you get the chance to live in another country, to learn a new language and to get to know a lot of new people and also their customs and traditions.

I'm really enjoying Samara and that's one reason why I never rued my decision even if it has been difficult sometimes.

Especially the beginning was tiring: not knowing the language, the city and the people around me. Although I had had Russian already in school, I didn't understand almost anything when I arrived. It was difficult to communicate in my host family and especially at work. But our language course helped me a lot. I was happy about learning in a group because after 3 month I was a little frustrated.



The missing language skills made it difficult to integrate in my project and I often just wanted to talk more with my host family, but it was quite difficult. That's why I am also really thankful to my host family. Whenever it's necessary they help me a lot. They know how to talk with me and teach me new vocabulary in a very patient way.

I remember, that I was wondering about some cultural things when I arrived. For example my family always eats quite late in the evening and I was used to eating earlier. I also remember that it was strange for them to see me using a knife to eat. For me it was normal, but they didn't use it and so I didn't find a simple knife in the kitchen. At work I also had to get used to a few circumstances. I still notice the cultural differences sometimes. At the beginning I was confused when some things just happened and nobody told me about it before.

Another day I came too late because of a problem at home. I was already a little nervous when I came to work, but they did not understand at all why I was so scared. They said: „It is Russia! It doesn't matter if you're late or not!“ I just didn't know it like this, but now I really enjoy

it sometimes. At work and in daily life, I learned a lot about communication, because I had no chance to talk in English and I had to speak Russian. I realised how I learned new vocabulary everyday just while listening to foreigners.

Every week I could understand more and I noticed a process. It was also interesting for me because I started to think about my own language, how it works and how it sounds to others. In general it was interesting to see the reaction when I said I'm from Germany. Sometimes they were very nice and sometimes they just talked about the past. I always had to explain that the time of 2nd world war is over and that I don't want to be connected with it just because I'm from Germany. But I learned to deal with those situations and I always tried to understand their views. Discussing questions like this makes me self-confident and I learn how to deal with others around me.

I really enjoy the intercultural communication. There are a lot of volunteers in Samara this year and we are so different. We talk about our culture and share our opinions. But even if we are so different, we have almost the same situation right now. It's great that we can talk about problems or new ideas. We also spend lots of time together and plan some activities. One event I will never forget in my life was the ice swimming on 19th January. On this date Russian orthodox believers go into a blessed section in frozen Volga in remembrance of Jesus' baptism.

But not only religious people do this, some people also say it would keep you healthy the whole year. And we wanted to keep ourselves healthy of course and that's why we went into this unbelievably cold water while it was -18 degree outside. I can't really say how it was, but I was so proud of myself afterwards!

If I had to decide again, I would choose the EVS again and I would also choose Russia again. My host father always says: „Будьте как дома“ to all our guests, which means „Make yourself at home!“ I almost always felt at home in this huge country and that's the best feeling I could get!

International Training for Trainers in Bali, Indonesia

In line with the objectives of the Erasmus+ Key Action 2 project “Skills and Competences for a Global World”, the international Training for Trainers in Intercultural Learning took place in Bali, Indonesia from 1 – 5 March 2018. Comprising 14 participants/trainers from 11 countries, the 5-day training focused on outlining and promoting key skills and competences of young people through volunteering.

Dejavato Foundation, the hosts of the training, also organised a visit to one of their local host projects, *SLB Negeri* School for the disabled. The visit consisted of a welcoming dance performance by some of the students, general information on the school, Q&A session with the school’s principal and a tour around the school’s premises.



Partners organisations in the project:

Grenzenlos – ICYE Austria; FIYE – ICYE Poland; KERIC – ICYE Slovakia; Maailmanvaihto – ICYE Finland; ICYE Denmark; ICYE Colombia; ICYE Honduras; ABIC – ICYE Brazil; ICYE Kenya; ICYE Nigeria; ICDE India; DEJAVATO – ICYE Indonesia; ICYE United Kingdom

Enter Digital Era. Kick off meeting hosted by ICYE Colombia



ICYE Colombia hosted the kick off meeting of the Project “Enter Digital Era”, an Erasmus+ Key Action 2 Capacity Building in the field of Youth, in Bogotá from 17th to 23rd of January 2018.

The project, coordinated by Associazione Culturale Strauss, Italy, and co-funded by the European Commission, aims to counteract underdevelopment in the youth work and voluntary sectors, and through digital development to help improve the capacity for innovation, internationalization and quality of services and activities offered by the organizations concerned.

The 11 participants are from the following partner organisations: Benemerita Universidad Autonoma de Puebla, Mexico; Akdeniz University, Turkey; Fundación SES, Argentina; Noored Ühiskonna Heaks, Estonia; Asociación Civil El Abrojo, Uruguay; A.D.I.C.E. France; EFM Poland; and ICYE Colombia.

Taiwan Lunar New Year Workshop for ICYE volunteers

On 7th December 2017, ICYE Taiwan held a workshop that enabled international volunteers to experience the Taiwan Lunar New Year. A handicrafts teacher was invited to teach volunteers the intricate technique of making "Chun-Hua" (a red paper flower that stands for good fortune and wishes). 11 volunteers from Honduras, Denmark, New Zealand, and Germany gathered in a local library for the workshop and made their very own Chun-Huas.



To celebrate Taiwan Lunar New Year, people use red paper and thread to make Chun-Hua and put them on rice cakes since they believe it will bring them abundant harvest in the coming year.

When making Chun-Hua, volunteers wrote down a Chinese calligraphic word "spring" on a piece of red paper and pasted it on the top of the flower, which was a great challenge for the international volunteers. But those who experienced this cultural event really enjoyed it and had a great time. Happy Doggy New Year.



Midterm and Final Evaluation Seminar in Vietnam

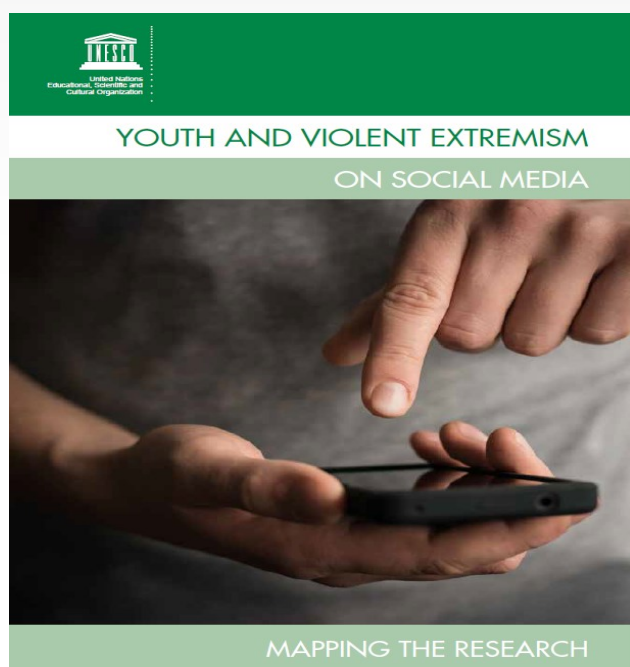
From the 22nd to 26th of January 2018, VPV - ICYE Vietnam conducted its mid-term and final evaluation seminar for 20 long-term ICYE volunteers from Austria, Germany, Finland and Switzerland. This was the chance for volunteers to reflect on their projects, open and pending issues and possible solutions, as well as their cultural shock and subsequent integration into local culture and communities.

The volunteers also had fun with a number of team-building activities like singing karaoke, playing Vietnamese traditional games and the "mission possible" race. Moreover, the volunteers enjoyed the interaction with the local people in Thai Hai stilt house village in the Thai Nguyen province north east of Hanoi where the seminar took place.



Youth and Violent Extremism on Social Media – Mapping the Research

The study Youth and Violent Extremism on Social Media – Mapping the Research provides a global mapping of research (mainly during 2012-16) about the assumed roles played by social media in violent radicalization processes, especially when they affect youth and women.



This review encompasses the diverse forms of violent radicalization phenomena, which aim to use violence as a modus operandi of their claims, communication and action strategies. Radicalization is seen as a process of rupture within society. View the full study in English under this [link](#). A summary information brochure is also available in [Arabic](#), [English](#) and [French](#).

European Solidarity Corps: one year since launch

One year since the European Commission launched the European Solidarity Corps, 42,745 young people from all Member States have signed up. 2,166 of them have started their placements with 1,434 organisations. Marianne Thyssen, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, added: "Participating in the European Solidarity Corps is not only a great way to show solidarity, it also allow young people to develop new skills and brings an added value to one's CV."



I hope our [proposal for a stronger Solidarity Corps](#) will be adopted soon so that we can increase opportunities for our European youth even more." [Learn more](#)



Across the globe, people are literally running for their lives as their homes and countries are ripped apart by the impacts of climate change. Extreme weather patterns, rising seas levels, and more frequent and catastrophic 'natural' disasters are forcing more and more people to leave their homes. Sign on to the [Global Climate Declaration](#) to call on policy makers to protect climate refugees.

YEU - netWorked Youth Research for Empowerment in Digital Society



Youth for Exchange and Understanding (YEU) recently presented the [WYRED - netWorked Youth Research for Empowerment in Digital Society](#) - where the

consortium aims to engage children and young people in decision-making on digital issues. Society is changing, the tools we use are changing, the way we express ourselves is changing. Young people are at the forefront of this change, but they rarely get a chance to say what they think, or to influence policy. WYRED aims to give the young a voice. [Visit the project website.](#)



The [State of Civil Society Report 2018](#) is out! As 2017 gave way to 2018, many in civil society found

renewed purpose in striving to make democracy real, and to demand human dignity and justice. Even as attacks on civil society have become more brazen, the story of the past year was one of resolute resistance against the tide of restrictions on fundamental freedoms and democratic values.

The State of Civil Society Report 2018 looks back at the key stories for civil society in 2017: the major events that civil society was involved in, responded to and was impacted by. [Read more](#)

2250: A YOUTH TOOLKIT

The United Nations Security Council adopted resolution 2250, the first ever thematic resolution on Youth, Peace and Security.

This historic document is very important for all young peacebuilders worldwide because it brings recognition and legitimacy for youth's efforts in building peace. Read more [here.](#)

