



Education and Culture DG

'Youth in Action' Programme

European Voluntary Service Accreditation Guidelines

Youth in Action Programme

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1. Introduction

The European Voluntary Service (EVS) strand of the European Union's Youth in Action Programme (2007-2013) aims to support young people taking part in voluntary activities abroad. Any organisation in a Programme Country (EU Member States, Croatia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey), in a country of South East Europe or in a country of Eastern Europe and Caucasus which wishes to send or host EVS volunteers or to coordinate an EVS project **must be accredited**. Promoters from other countries may participate in EVS projects without accreditation.

This guide is intended to help promoters to obtain EVS accreditation.

2. What is accreditation?

Accreditation is a procedure to support organisations that want to take part in EVS. It is designed to ensure consistently high standards in EVS and to help organisations find partners. Accreditation is a quality assurance process facilitating communication between the promoter and programme structures, so that all parties involved are aware of the values, objectives and rules of EVS. All accredited organisations must show they are able to implement EVS projects according to the rules of the Youth in Action Programme. Accreditation is an organisation's entry ticket for EVS, and proves that it complies with the programme's quality standards.

The accreditation is a prerequisite for participation, but does not automatically lead to an EVS project grant. The future project grant applications will be assessed based on the criteria presented in the Programme Guide and according to the quality of the specific project.

3. What is an 'Expression of Interest (EI)'?

Organisations that want to become EVS promoters must submit an *Expression of Interest* (EI) describing their general motivation and ideas for EVS activities. This must be written in English, and submitted on the official form, since parts of it will be published on the European database of accredited organisations. A promoter can seek accreditation as a Sending, Host and/or Coordinating Organisation on the same official form.

Writing the Expression of Interest is a good opportunity to think carefully about ideas for projects and to set them out in a way that will be meaningful also for potential partners or volunteers.

Promoters seeking EVS accreditation should describe their organisation briefly, and say why they want to become involved in EVS. They also have to answer questions related to the roles of Sending or Host Organisations.

Applicants must send the following documents:

- An original printed copy of the Expression of Interest form, completed and signed by the legal representative of the promoter,
- a copy of the Expression of Interest form in electronic format (CD or email to the accrediting Agency/SALTO),
- a copy of the registered statute of the organisation submitting this form.

The Agency/accreditors will contact the representative of the promoter given as a contact person on the EI-form. They may have questions, and will arrange interviews and visits to the organisation.

4. Who is the accreditation for?

Accreditation is for organisations that want to host or receive volunteers, or to act as coordinators of a project. To obtain accreditation, the organisation submitting the Expression of Interest must be clearly identified, as must the location of the activities planned. The organisation submitting the EI-form can, if successful in obtaining accreditation, draw on the support of contact points outside that same organisation. However, as concerns hosting, a volunteer must be hosted by the accredited local Host Organisation which is identified as a partner promoter in the project, and this Host Organisation must also carry all costs. The Host Organisation will be the entity evaluated and accredited.

An Expression of Interest should not refer to the entirety of a complex organisation with numerous departments and/or branches in general terms. The information entered on the form should make clear the location, project environment and possible activities for volunteers.

EXAMPLES

- If the youth services of a large municipality intend to host a volunteer, the application should clearly specify the kindergarten, youth club or social work project in which volunteers would be active.
- If a youth association has several local branches, and plans to have several volunteers, each in a different place, then it needs several separate accreditations.

5. Who processes requests for accreditation?

Accreditation of EVS promoters is carried out by:

- the **Executive Agency** for promoters that are
 - a) a body active at European level in the youth field;
 - b) an international governmental organisation
 - c) a profit-making organisation organising an event in the area of youth, sport or culture
- the respective **National Agency** of the Youth in Action programme for all other promoters located in Programme Countries
- **SALTO EECA** for all other promoters located in Eastern Europe and Caucasus

- **SALTO SEE** for all other promoters located in South East Europe

6. When should an organisation apply for accreditation?

Organisations can submit their *Expressions of Interest* at any time to the respective Agency or SALTO. Since organisations must have a valid accreditation at the date of the project application deadline, promoters are advised to submit their EI-form well before they plan to take part in their first project. It takes about six weeks to process an Expression of Interest, but organisations should allow longer to be on the safe side. Once approved, accreditation is valid for a maximum of three years, though the promoter may request a shorter validity period, and the accreditors reserve the right to grant accreditation for a shorter period. On expiry, accreditation can be renewed by submitting a new *Expression of Interest*.

7. Who issues accreditation?

That depends on the location and status of the promoter. The relevant Agency/SALTO coordinates the accreditation process. They give information and support to promoters and receive Expressions of Interest.

Accreditors appointed by the Agency/SALTO evaluate Expressions of Interest and carry out interviews with promoters. Accreditors may be Agency/SALTO staff, Commission staff, external experts, former volunteers, volunteer trainers or regional information providers. To avoid conflicts of interest, accreditors must not be members of a selection committee deciding on project applications and they must not in any way be involved in EVS-projects.

At least two accreditors will assess each Expression of Interest to ensure that all are dealt with in an objective and fair way. The role of the accreditors is to assess the quality of applicants and to support them. In most cases, at least one accreditor will visit the applicant to meet those who will be responsible for running the project, to get to know the organisation and to discuss all aspects of the Expression of Interest. (see more under: 'What is being assessed?').

Accreditors may ask for further clarification, suggest improvements and possibly ask for revisions to an Expression of Interest.

The accreditors assess the application on behalf of the Agency/SALTO. They collect further information as necessary and provide the Agency with a recommendation. If both accreditors agree to accept the organisation, the application will be approved straight away. If both accreditors agree on rejection, the applicant will receive a letter to this effect, stating the reasons for rejection. If the accreditors disagree, the application will remain 'under evaluation' until the accreditors have negotiated a decision, whether among themselves or with the applicant.

8. What is being assessed?

Before submitting an *Expression of Interest*, promoters should consult the Youth in Action Programme Guide. It is also useful to take a look at the European database of accredited organisations.

The Expression of Interest can only be assessed if all parts of the form have been corrected completed.

All organisations must apply the principles of the *EVS Charter* at all stages of the project. This is the basis for accreditation. The *EVS Charter* is a part of the Youth in Action Programme Guide. It highlights the roles of each organisation in an EVS project, as well as the main principles and quality standards of EVS. The National Agency/SALTO Resource Centre may withdraw accreditation at any time if an organisation fails to comply with the *EVS Charter*.

More specifically, the accreditors' assessment of a promoter will be based on the following:

For all promoters:

Motivation and experience, in particular:

- motivation for taking part in EVS
- previous experience with Youth in Action, EVS, international projects and working with full-time volunteers

Knowledge of Youth in Action and EVS, in particular:

- the EVS Charter
- the Training and Evaluation Cycle
- understanding the importance of good partnerships
- the EVS Agreement
- the group insurance plan for EVS volunteers
- the document "what to expect from EVS"
- funding rules and the need for co-funding
- making EVS available free of charge for the volunteer, except for a possible contribution to travel costs (max. 10 %)

The organisation's aims, activities and capacities, in particular:

- the organisation's aims and objectives
- regular activities
- organisational, administrative and financial capacity, particularly in order to have assurance regarding the number of volunteers the promoter has capacity to send/host or coordinate at the same time
- role of Contact Point outside the organisation (if identified in the Expression of Interest form)

Risk, safety and well-being, in particular:

- how to prevent risks and crises
- how to manage conflicts and cultural shock
- how to guarantee safe living and working conditions

Ideas for future projects, in particular:

- possible themes and activities
- relevance to Youth in Action objectives and priorities
- inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities

- plans for evaluation during and after a project
- ideas concerning visibility of Youth in Action, as well as dissemination and exploitation of results

Recruitment of volunteers, in particular:

- how to ensure an open and transparent recruitment process
- awareness that EVS is open to all young people, regardless of background, competence or experience

For Host Organisations:

Possible volunteer tasks, in particular:

- awareness of and ideas for well-defined tasks constituting 30-38 hours per week
- how to avoid job-substitution and routine tasks
- how to ensure quality task-related training and support
- possibility for the volunteer to influence and shape the tasks according to her/his profile and interests

Learning aspects, in particular:

- familiarity with the concepts of non-formal learning and intercultural learning
- learning opportunities offered through the service
- arrangements for language training
- awareness of the Youthpass

Personal support, in particular:

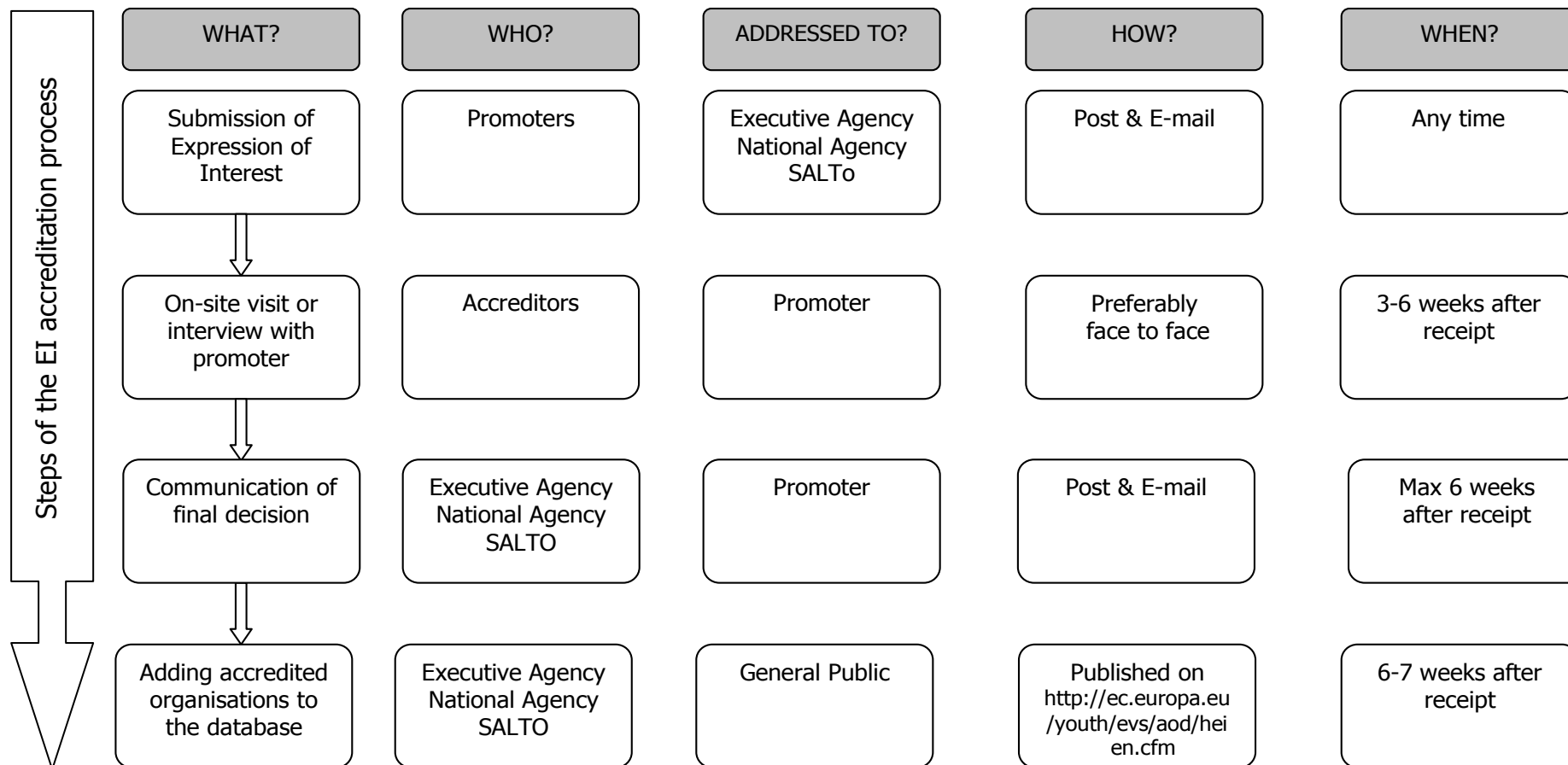
- mentor
- integration of volunteers into the local community

Practical arrangements, in particular:

- accommodation
- arrangements for food, local transport and volunteer allowance
- awareness of issues relating to the visa, residence permit and other administrative issues in the host country

For Sending Organisations:

- Arrangements for pre-departure preparation
- How to stay in contact with and support the volunteer during the service period



9. After accreditation

The respective Agency/SALTO is responsible for adding the accredited organisations to the European database of accredited organisations. The database is a main tool to find partners in the framework of EVS.

The full name and contact details of the contact person identified in the *Expression of Interest* form is published together with description of the organisation, motivation and EVS experience, and the project environment. The contact person will also be responsible for keeping contact details up-to-date and informing the Agency/SALTO if there are periods during which the organisation does not intend to be involved in any projects. It would, in this case, be temporarily removed from the EVS database.

Information in the database is published as it is formulated in the *Expression of Interest* form. It is therefore crucial that organisations write clearly so that potential partners and volunteers can get a good impression of the organisation and its involvement in EVS.

Once the organisation receives a confirmation from the Agency/SALTO about accreditation, it may take part in its first EVS project application!

10. More information

[Youth in Action Programme](#); [Youth in Action Programme Guide](#) and [EVS Charter](#)

[National Agencies and SALTO Resource Centres](#)

[European database of EVS promoters](#)

[Otlas – the partner finding tool](#)