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## *Volunteer to improve your potential*

**Rubric: Interview with volunteer**

*Bulgarian girl experience in Sweden*

**Rubric: Volunteers rights**

*More about volunteers rights*

*EVS- is to realize how much I love my country, culture, family and friends*

**Bilyana Tihova**

**26 years old, from Bulgaria**

**Volunteer in Sweden**

**Why did you decide to participate in voluntary work?**

I decided to participate in EVS, because I wanted to visit another country and to live in for a certain period of time – I accepted this opportunity as a challenge for me and I wanted to test myself in a different situation – away from my home and family. I wanted to meet new people and to develop new skills and gain new knowledge and experience.

**What is the main activity that you do?**

I'm working in an organization, which is part of the local municipality, which deals with young people aged 16-25, called "participants", who are unemployed or who have dropped-out of school and through a workshop, called "Plug-In", which lasts 8 weeks the supervisors are trying to help them to find job or to continue with their studies and go back to normal life after the workshop, as they have also individual coaches during and after it. My personal task is to prepare with my colleague-volunteer the breakfast every morning for these participants and we should also make different activities with them, but depending on their week schedule.

**How did you choose your project?**

Actually it happened quite accidentally for me, because I learned about this project at the end of May, this year and I decided to apply for it and I haven't chosen among other projects.

**Do you have any problems in your volunteer job?**

Unfortunately problems are unavoidable and when you live and work with other completely different people from you, coming from different cultures and with different understandings and habits, different kinds of problems may always appear and now, I would also say that I have different problems with some of the other volunteers, who I'm living and working with, but I'm trying to set aside from them and to pay attention to more important things in my work and life.

### **How do you spend your free time?**

I'm relaxing, I'm studying Swedish now and also improving my English. I go to party every Saturday evening and I'm also trying to meet new people, to socialize and visit different activities whenever possible.

### **Did you have culture shock when you arrived in the country where your volunteer work is?**

Yes, when I arrived everything was completely new and different for me – the country, the atmosphere, the infrastructure, the cuisine and other cultural aspects – I would say that I'm still going through a kind of “cultural shock”, because I'm still seeing and understanding things which are completely different from my own understandings and expectations, but I think that this is an unavoidable process, which may be more or less will continue till the end of my stay here.

### **What are the biggest benefits of the volunteer work for you?**

The biggest benefits of the volunteer work for me are related with my personal development and gaining of new knowledge, skills and experience. That's one of the reasons I decided to take part in an EVS-project, because I wanted to develop my personal skills and to gain another job experience through working in a foreign country with foreign people and to gain a new perspective.

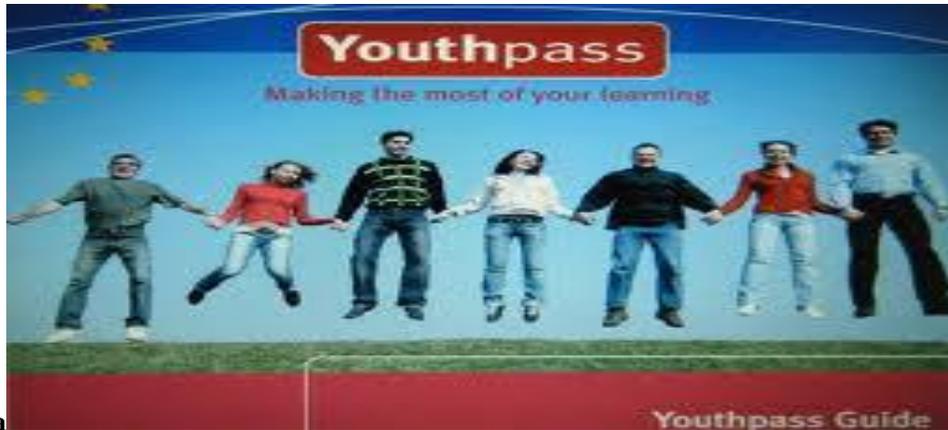
### **What are your plans after the project?**

I think that one of the very possible and good effects after an EVS-service is to realize how much you love your own country, culture, family and friends and to want to go back there and to try to use these good practices, good experience and new knowledge, which you have gained during the service period and to try to apply them in your own country and to try to change or improve something there. So, I think I will try to find job and “try my luck” here, but if I don't succeed, I'll go back to Bulgaria and I'll try to find my job realization there, as I'll use the experience and knowledge, which I'll have gained here and I hope that this will be my biggest benefit and advantage.

### **Did EVS change your life?**

It's still too early to say that, because they've hardly passed only 3 months of my project, but for the moment I would say that it changed more or less the direction of my life, but maybe only time will show whether this EVS experience will be the “big change” of my life or an experience, which helped me to realize the really important things in my life and to rediscover my priorities.

## *Volunteers rights*



### **EVS principles to be ensured**

- The non-formal learning and intercultural dimension, through a clear definition of a learning plan for the volunteer.
- The service dimension through a clear definition of the non-profit-making character of the project and the volunteer tasks. Full-time service and active role of the volunteer in implementing the activities have to be ensured. EVS volunteer activities must not replace any employment.
- The benefit to and the contact with the local community.
- EVS is free of charge for the volunteers.
- Accessibility and Inclusion: when recruiting EVS volunteers, the organisations maintain the overall accessibility of EVS for all young people, without prejudice related to ethnic group, religion, sexual orientation, political opinion, etc. If the project targets volunteers with fewer opportunities, facilities and capacity in providing tailor-made preparation, and support have to be in place.

### **Support to the volunteer**

- before, during and after the EVS activities, in particular in crisis prevention and management;
- for insurance, visa, residence permit, travel arrangements and all the EVS administrative procedures;
- by facilitating the volunteer's participation in the EVS training cycle (pre-departure training, on arrival –training, mid-term evaluation and evaluation of the Activity);
- by foreseeing proper evaluation measures.

### **Information**

- All EVS partners have the right to receive complete information on the Activity and agree on all aspects.
- Visibility, dissemination and publicity measures have to be in place.

## Recognition

Each EVS volunteer is entitled to receive a Youthpass

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