

EVS for ENVIRONMENT



YEE 
YOUTH AND
ENVIRONMENT
EUROPE

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EDITORIAL TEAM:

Mercedes Fioravanti (EVS volunteer), Mathieu Frediere (EVS volunteer), Gosia Zubowicz-Thull (EVS coordinator), Adriána Harnúšková, Tomáš Protivínský and Candice Sly (proofreading).

CONTRIBUTORS:

Francesco Ballone, Melanie Ruppe, Sebastian Nießen, , Antonieta Lopes, Vladimira Lackova, Jana Javorska, Anna Svetnik (IYNF), Nikolett Kékesi (Ecomission 21st Century), Sara Serrão (GAIA), Maili Lehtpuu (Eco-Initiative Association).

PICTURES:

Anna Svetnik (page 39), Antonieta Lopes (page 40), Vladimira Lackova (page 41), Jana Javorska (page 42), Ecomission 21st Century (page 43), GAIA (page 44), Eco-Initiative Association (page 45), YEE archive (all other pages).

EVS

(European Voluntary Service)

FOR ENVIRONMENT

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EDITORIAL

Youth and Environment Europe (YEE) works daily with more than 40 youth environmental organisations across Europe. All our projects are prepared and attended by volunteers. In our network we try to show **how many things young volunteers can do for the environment**. That is also why we host EVS volunteers in our office in Prague. We try to make our project a real learning experience with many possibilities of experiencing various things and learning new skills – especially connected with the environment.

European Year of Volunteering is a good occasion to speak about volunteering and show the results of our EVS project. As all the work of the network is based on volunteering for the environment, it is a very crucial topic for us. We want to promote using the EVS scheme in projects connected with the environment. So, during this special year we also wanted to make our YEE statement. It is also a good opportunity to reflect on the EVS projects in YEE – we have been hosting volunteers for 10 years already. It is important to look at our project and pass some experience further.

The main reason for creating this booklet is to show what volunteers can do for environment. That is why our current volunteers described their project in YEE. You will find here examples of activities carried out by volunteers, results of project and what volunteers learnt out of it. The booklet was prepared mainly by them and allowed them to reflect on their activities, learning process and ideas that could inspire other volunteers and organisations.

We focused on activities that are connected with the environment, however in the EVS project in YEE volunteers learn also many things about youth work, administration and technical skills. Variety is very crucial for our EVS project. To show how EVS projects can be connected with environment, we tried to show it from various perspectives – through **examples of activities that volunteers do in YEE**, giving voice to **previous volunteers** and showing **other EVS projects that focus on environment**.

We hope that with this publication we can inspire organisations that are already hosting volunteers to widen and vary their activities. We hope to encourage environmental organisations to host EVS volunteers. And of course we also want to motivate young people to do EVS projects in environmental organisations.

I hope this publication will bring you many new ideas and inspiration on **how and why to do EVS for the environment!**

Gosia Zubowicz-Thull
EVS coordinator in YEE

EVS in YEE

WHAT IS EVS?

EVS = EUROPEAN VOLUNTARY SERVICE

WHAT?

European Voluntary Service (EVS) is a programme that gives young people the opportunity to spend **up to 12 months abroad as volunteers** helping in local projects in various fields (environment, work with children, youth and elderly people, culture, sport, etc.). EVS is Action 2 of Youth in Action Programme of the European Commission.

WHERE?

Volunteers can make their EVS project in all EU countries and outside of Europe. Check for hosting organisations in **the database of accredited projects**:
ec.europa.eu/youth/evs/aod/hei_en.cfm

WHO?

Young people between 18 and 30 can join.

HOW?

Volunteer has to:

- Find a sending organisation in his/her country
- Find a project in a hosting organisation in another country
- Apply for the project and be approved by the organisation

Then an organisation applies for funds to Youth in Action programme. The project can start 3 months after.

More information can be found at the website of Youth in Action:

eacea.ec.europa.eu/youth/programme/action2_en.php

WHY EVS IN YEE?

Youth and Environment Europe has been **hosting EVS volunteers since 2001**. Already more than **15 volunteers** had the opportunity to learn through the work in our organisation. YEE is an international network that unites more than 40 youth environmental organisations from 28 European countries. YEE works with young people, with volunteers and on the international level so taking part in EVS programme goes in line with the aims of the network. The office of YEE is located in Prague, the Czech Republic and this is where volunteers make their project.

We called the EVS project in YEE **'Youth for Environment'**. The main goal of YEE network is to support appreciation of nature and raise awareness about environmental problems among European youth. The federation found out that EVS project is an excellent tool for achieving this goal, on a small scale. The project is composed of three parts (**work in YEE office, in the ecological farm Toulcův Dvůr and on personal project**) so that volunteers would have the opportunity to do useful things for environment in various ways, as active involvement of young people in environmental projects is the key focus of our EVS project. In this booklet you will find many examples of their activities connected with environment.

We decided to host volunteers as we believe that this project can give them the opportunity to learn a lot about environment and at the same time **gain various skills** needed for work in an international NGO. The origin of the project was noticing the possibilities of learning various skills in the office as YEE does many different activities. Volunteers can learn how to organise projects, network, coordinate activities, work in international team, facilitate meetings, make action plans, brainstorming, etc.

It was also the potential that every EVS volunteer can bring to the office where the team is international, young and encourages learning from each other and intercultural learning that initiated hosting EVS volunteers in YEE. YEE is a network of youth organisations so the involvement of young people is the key characteristic of all our actions. From the beginning of the project EVS volunteers are part of the organisation and have the possibility to be involved in many various projects, try different tasks, take initiative and learn how to cooperate with other young people from many countries.

EVS is an amazing learning opportunity, both for volunteers and for the organisation. But it should be well prepared, planned and improved every year.

So organisations – try to adapt your project to new volunteers, be creative, invent new ways of learning and give volunteers the possibility to take initiative!



MERCEDES

My EVS project in YEE has been a total immersion in environmental work. I have been always interested and concerned about ecological issues, but I can say this is the first time I am actively doing something for it.

YEE is an umbrella organisation that serves its member organisations as a platform to contact each other, exchange experiences and ideas and work together. **Helping to make this network function is one of the most important parts of the EVS tasks.** To this end, I learnt how to work with many computer programmes and software, how to communicate with the other organisations, how to coordinate the publication of the e-newsletter and other magazines and especially, how to **work in a team** and in an international environment.

It is very easy to feel part of YEE and discover its philosophy and way of working when you take part in some of its projects. I helped organising the youth exchange 'Learning from each other', where I learnt not only new methods of environmental education, but I also gained many organisational and leading skills. The most valuable thing that I got from this and other projects, was the chance to **meet a lot of people interested in environmental protection**, take part in many discussions on this topic, share good practices and get lots of inspiration.



Toulcův Dvůr, the ecological centre where YEE office is located, offered me many ways to get involved in its activities and learn more about **Czech folk celebrations and traditions.**

The Czech Republic is a country that provides young people with **many possibilities to get close to nature and do something useful for it** in their free time. I attended many volunteering weekends run by other organisations, where I broadened my knowledge about environment and developed many new skills. I also met many other foreign and Czech young volunteers with whom I could exchange experiences and different points of view.

Last very important part of the EVS is the development of a mini-project. All the things about environment I learnt, the new skills I acquired and the experiences I lived during my EVS, helped me to figure out what I wanted to do for **my EVS mini-project** – the introduction of volunteering weekends in my local region through a youth initiative. There were two key factors which drove me to work for this idea. First, being part of the European programme 'Youth in Action' and volunteering in a European network, lead me to discover much more about the European institutions and their funding opportunities. This way, I found out the 'Youth Initiatives', a part of the 'Youth in Action' programme, which supports group projects designed at local level. The other important fact were the volunteering work camp weekends organised by Czech NGOs that I attended, which inspired me and made me want to bring my local community a bit closer to nature and its protection. In consequence and thanks to my EVS experience, **I will keep on volunteering and working for the environment** even once my EVS project will be over.

Mercedes Fioravanti, Spain

MATHIEU

I am a person interested in environment, in its large definition, not only in going out in nature, but in the entire process of keeping it unharmed and ensuring that we can all enjoy it. Before I started thinking about making EVS, part of my work and studies was about Environment Management Systems. However, it was not fulfilling my desire, since I wanted to dedicate more time to environment and adopt a less formal approach regarding its promotion and preservation. Thus I decided to become an EVS volunteer.

There are many organisations looking after the environment in Europe. However, YEE's project was the one appealing to me the most. **Making EVS project in this organisation implies using a wide range of tools.** I think that working for the environment does not only include concrete actions with a direct link to nature. The main goal is to protect and appreciate the environment and there are many ways to achieve this.

Communication was an important part of our work here. As YEE is a network, it is very important to have the information going through it, between member organisations and the office. Additionally, communicating about the environment is a way to make people more concerned about it. What is it about concretely? Well... There are two parts of it, one is dematerialised and is operated through internet, the other is more concrete and is realised while meeting people.

Concerning the digital way, I did acquire and improve my skills. We managed a website where we centralised the information that youth environmental organisations want to share; we used software like Photoshop and InDesign to realise our promotional materials; we developed and published an e-newsletter to spread information about environmental topics and we edited and wrote articles for our booklets. Next to that, I had the opportunity to try new activities on my own. Thus I participated in a web radio to promote EVS and we



used the idea later in our work at YEE. This office work permitted me to improve my team work and organising skills since we do not only focus on the outcome of our work but also on how to do it and how to involve everyone in its realisation.

To communicate our activities directly to people, we took part in events like NGO markets or we presented our organisation in actions like the Day of the Earth. This allowed me to work on my presentation skills and the way I approach people. It forced us to find ways to disseminate the knowledge and skills we had been gathering during our projects.

Being active for the environment also involves **preparing and taking part in environmental events.** We participated in the Environmental Audit project, by doing the eco-mapping of a festival area. It provided us with the opportunity to use a world-recognised tool to assess and decrease the environmental impact of an activity. We were sometimes more involved in actions also as organisers. We helped to prepare a youth exchange where youth from all over Europe learned from each other environmental education methods. In a cooperation with other organisations we organised volunteering weekends, one to clean a forest and another to improve the ecological centre where YEE is located. From those experiences, I learned how to organise events, disseminate results and use them.

Besides our work in YEE, **we had other opportunities to do something for the environment.** We could take part in volunteering weekends, like those organised by Tamjdem or Hnutí Brontosaurus. That way we could fully enjoy the richness of the EVS programme by meeting new people, discovering the country we lived in and doing something good for the environment.

Mathieu Frediere, France



EVS for Environment

WORKING IN THE OFFICE

Volunteers in YEE carry out different kinds of activities and have various tasks to realise. Part of the work is done in the office. Working for environment can also involve working on computers. Some of YEE's actions require preparation, networking, communication through internet and this kind of work has to be done in an office. What does it involve?

An important part of the volunteers' work is to take care of YEE's communication. Indeed, **sharing information within the network and promoting the environment** are crucial. This does include various tasks, like updating the website and the Facebook page, realising an e-Newsletter, making a blog. Those tasks permit to train informatics skills since different kind of software is necessary to realise them. Thus, volunteers get to know applications like Joomla, Word, Power Point, Mail Chimp, Photoshop, InDesign.

Organisations should provide volunteers with possibilities to be creative. Communication can bring good opportunities for it. Indeed it requires to be appealing to have a good impact. Communication is an entire process and it allows everybody to train their organisational and team work skills. Volunteers can

also bring their own ideas and skills. This is how, for example, YEE started to have on-line audio files on its website.

The work at the office requires working with people who are far away. Thus volunteers can learn how to work by distance, having internet as the only way to communicate.

Another part of the volunteers' work is to organise and take part in events. They can be one-day actions like a NGO market or longer ones like youth exchanges or training courses. Such projects require preparation and volunteers can actively take part in it. This is a good opportunity for both the organisation and the volunteers to share their knowledge and skills in order to reach a common goal. Organisation can, at the beginning, take more responsibilities for the organisation of the events and as the

volunteers gain experience they can be more and more autonomous.

During the events, either the **volunteers can carry out some of the activities or they can take care of external tasks.** For example, they can represent the organisation by themselves during a NGO market and be responsible for this action. For projects requiring some specific skills like a training course, they can be participants but also take care of energisers, evening programmes, preparing the snacks, recording participants' opinions.

Working in an office can sometimes be considered not very exciting. There are ways to cheer it up in a useful way. For example, you can organise learning days, where team members share with the others the skills and knowledge they get during projects. You can all have lunch together and use this moment to speak only in the language of the country.

Organisations can invite volunteers into the decision process when it is possible. Hence, when there is a meeting concerning the work of the organisation, volunteers can actively take part in it. It makes them feel a part of the team and they can bring many interesting observations and ideas.



HELPING IN THE ECOLOGICAL CENTRE

YEE office is located in a unique place in Prague, the **eco-centre Toulcův Dvůr**. With an incredibly high biodiversity (taking into account that it is inside a capital city!), it hosts not only hundreds of species of plants and animals but also **many different organisations** that provide volunteers with many possibilities to get experience and help at the same time.

The **horse riding school** organises lessons for children and adults and **hippotherapy** lessons for people with disabilities. It has long experience in working with volunteers. Many EVS volunteers of YEE have helped cleaning stables and horses and riding along with the children.



Semínko is the **ecological kindergarten**, which provides children from 3 to 7 years with an education for sustainable development and with strong contact with nature. Volunteers are always welcome to attend or run workshops with children, like the one where one of the EVS volunteers helped for the elaboration of juggling materials.

ZČ Hnutí Brontosaurus Botič runs **environmental education programmes** for children, youth and families. EVS volunteers from YEE can help with the preparation of materials for their educational programmes and take part in them.



Toulcův dvůr works as well for the **promotion and preservation of Czech traditions**. Masopust (farewell to meat) is the Czech carnival. It is celebrated with a parade with many characters like the devil, a horse, a bear, a goat, etc. performed by workers of Toulcův Dvůr and volunteers. The arrival of autumn and the time to harvest are also celebrated in the eco-centre. EVS volunteers of YEE have then the chance to help in the organisation of this event and get to know more about Czech customs, like the traditional making of placka (pancakes) from the preparation of wheat flour to the baking on the fire.

It is always nice to get to know the culture and traditions of the community where you are when you move to a different country. There are probably some organisations in your area that work on that topic or some communities that enjoy celebrating traditional events. Try to **involve your organisation and volunteers in such activities**, it is a good way to **understand the customs, meet local people and practise the language**.



ORGANISING A YOUTH EXCHANGE

Among the actions for youth carried out along Europe you can find many various projects. Next to EVS, there are other actions, like **youth exchanges** for example, which aim to promote a sense of 'Europeanness' among youth and encourage them to participate in the democratic process. Thus some funds can be granted to an organisation in order to organise events like youth exchanges. **During those projects, youth from different countries gather and have occasion to explore their social and cultural differences and similarities.** The theme must be relevant for their daily experience and have a clear European dimension. It can be for example: local heritage, young people in society or environment.

As part of the project in YEE, **EVS volunteers took part in the organisation and participated in a youth exchange**, called 'Learning from each other – methods of environmental education'. During this project, 27 young participants from 7 different countries and organisations gathered for 7 days in the Czech countryside. They exchanged methods and good practises related to environment they can use in their everyday work with children and youth.

Such project requires lots of preparations, both from the participants' side and from



the organisers. Each team was leading one day, with their own activities and methods to present to the others. However, there were also everyday tasks for the organisers such as supporting the participant teams, helping with the integration of everybody in the group, solving the problems that might appear or improving the project according to participants' suggestions.

As organisers, EVS volunteers had the occasion to discover and actively take part in the realisation process of such an important event. It brought them the opportunity to see how an international project is done from its preparation phase to the follow up activities, working on every stage.



When it is possible, the organisation can give volunteers more responsibilities for some activities. For example, EVS volunteers were responsible for a treasure hunting to integrate participants at the beginning of the project. They also took care of the evening programme and the energisers. Thus the organisation can profit of its volunteers' ideas and motivation, and they have the opportunity to train their creative, organising and motivating skills.

As participants, EVS volunteers represented a Czech NGO from YEE Network: Hnutí Brontosaurus. That way they were also responsible for one day of activities. It was a good way to get to know more about Czech culture and possible activities for volunteers, but also to improve their presentation and leading skills.

To conclude, **youth exchanges are a really good opportunity for an organisation to wider its knowledge and skills.** It can participate in one or organise it itself. Since this is a meeting of youth interested in a specific topic and who wish to share knowledge and experience about it, it completely matches the spirit of EVS. Thus EVS volunteers could take part in it as actively as possible.

The Youth Exchange organised by YEE, provided all participants with new skills and knowledge about environmental education. Afterwards we made a booklet to gather the different methods discovered during the project which permitted to disseminate its results.

CREATING PUBLICATIONS

The **booklet ‘Discover Nature – Tools for environmental education’** was the result of the youth exchange ‘Learning from each other – methods of environmental education’. When YEE organises such a project, where many experiences and knowledge are shared and exchanged, it aims to reach not only the participants attending the activities but also many other young people and organisations involved in environmental protection.

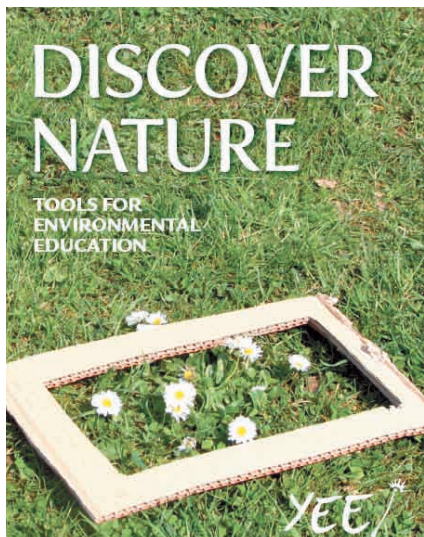
For that reason, we decided to gather all the methods and tools presented during the youth exchange and put them into a useful and handy booklet.

As EVS volunteers of YEE and participants of the youth exchange, we were fully involved in the development and publication of this booklet. We collected all the materials, edited and organised them. It brought us experience in preparing publications which is very useful when you want to **disseminate the results of a project or activity**. This is also the case of the booklet you have now in your hands.

We believe that involving EVS volunteers in these kinds of tasks is a good idea. The preparation of a publication related to the activities done in the organisation can be a **good way of reflecting on what you have done and learnt**. It is as well a project that implies a lot of **organisation, planning and time management**. If volunteers are in charge of the coordination of the publications’ team, they will also improve their **facilitation and leadership skills**.

Have a look at the online version of the booklet on our website (section Publications):

www.yeenet.eu/index.php/publications/yee-magazine



MONITORING WATER



Work in the office is crucial in an environmental international network but can make you sometimes feel far from the environmental research and protection. That is why it is very important to combine it with some **real environmental actions** which can bring you closer to nature.

Every year YEE office team organises a day-trip for the **World Water Monitoring Day**. WWMD is a quite simple world-wide initiative: you order the water monitoring kit on the website, go to some water body, analyse the water following the steps explained in the instructions and you obtain the results of the quality of water. WWMD is an international project so you can **share the results with participating communities** around the world through their website.

The EVS volunteers are usually in charge of choosing the place, arranging the travelling connections and checking whether the monitoring kits contain all needed elements. It is a good way of training their **organising skills** and getting some **knowledge of a concrete environmental topic**.

This serves YEE also as a **team building activity** and it is a good opportunity for EVS volunteers to become more integrated in the team and to discover new places in the country.

Check the website of World Water Monitoring Day:

www.worldwatermonitoringday.org

ECO-MAPPING

There are many different ways to protect the environment – you can promote it, do environmental education, raise people's awareness... There are also methods, like the **environmental analysis**, that are used to assess the environmental aspects of an organisation's activities and their impacts on the environment in order to take proper and adequate actions to lower it. These methods are usually used in an organisation's system to assess and reduce its impact on the environment. This system is called **Environmental Management System**.

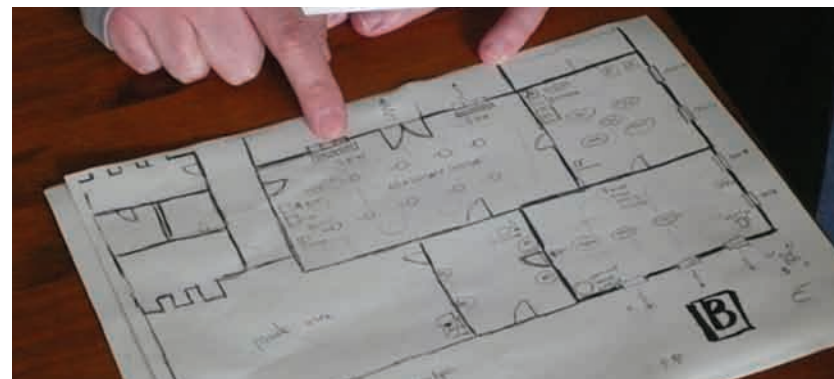
EVS volunteers in YEE took part in the **Environmental Audit project**. At their arrival they participated in the evaluation meeting of the project where participants evaluated their action plans and progress. It permitted volunteers to get to know more about Environmental Management Systems and more precisely about the environmental analysis and the **eco-mapping technique**.

As a part of YEE's action plan, members of the YEE office and a person from a member organisation went to **realise the eco mapping of a festival area**. This technique enables to assess how, to what extent and on which part of the environment (air, water, soil, waste, energy...) the activities carried on the festival park have an impact on. **It has the advantage of being simple and can be done with few resources**. Indeed you mark different maps of the area you evaluate, one for each aspect of the environment, and what and where the impacts are. Then you have to evaluate which ones are the most important. After that you assess what actions can be done and prioritise them. You can then realise an action plan.



After the evaluation, propositions were made to the staff of the festival area, in order to help them to have more environmentally friendly practises. For example, they were using chemicals directly on the ground, without containment basin, thus we proposed them to put an isolation on the ground to avoid any chemicals going to the soil.

Volunteers were involved in all the aspects of the action: preparation, realisation and follow up. Such projects are a good opportunity for organisations to **discover new environmental tools** and have a systematic approach towards the protection of the environment. It is a tool that is often new for both the organisation and the EVS volunteers. That is why it can be a good occasion to discover something together, which is a **very good team-spirit builder**. Having everyone involved at the same level for such a project can help the volunteers to fully feel part of the team.



Eco-mapping is a practical method of environmental analysis, focused mainly on field observations for the evaluation of the environmental problems and team consultation for the selection of actions.

Make eco-mapping in your organisation:

- Each observer walks through the evaluated area with a map of it. There is one map per type of impact on the environment (impact on water, soil, air, wastes, energy, risks or chemicals). Every time she/he notices an environmental aspect of the activities of the organisation, she/he marks it on the map.
- Together with your team you can then assess what are your significant environmental aspects by evaluating which environmental problems are the most important according to criteria like the energy and material wasted, the seriousness of the risks, the current practices.
- At the end you can prioritise your actions and make an action plan.

If you want to know more about Environmental Management System and the eco-mapping method you can have a look at the following links:

YEE Publication about Environmental Management System:

www.yeenet.eu/index.php/publications/yee-general-publications

YEE project report about YEE Environmental Audit project:

www.yeenet.eu/index.php/projects/yee-completed-projects/499

ORGANISING LOCAL ACTIONS

YEE day was not a long international project but a **one-day local action**. However, it made us put all our skills into practise.

We had to **network and cooperate** while preparing the project since we organised the activity with Hnutí Brontosaurus, one of the member organisations of YEE. We organised regular meetings with the organising team and communicated via internet to set up all the details of the event. We planned the agenda for YEE day in the Czech Republic. We decided to include it as part of the Forest Campaign run in YEE on the occasion of the International Year of Forests 2011.

We trained our **computer and creative skills** designing the informative leaflets and promotional posters of the event in the Czech Republic. The leaflet was a collection of ideas and tips for the other member organisations on how to make their own YEE day. We presented these ideas and handed out the leaflets during YEE Annual Meeting.

YEE day in the Czech Republic took place in the small town Dobříš where we helped the local community to clean the forest. We prepared some **name games and ice-breaking games** in order to energise and create a nice atmosphere within the group of participants. Taking some inspiration from the booklet 'Discover Nature' and other YEE publications, we organised many games and small activities in the forest.

The final result was a whole day of **physical work, in contact with nature and shared with many other people who care for the environment**. We cleaned up an illegal dumping ground in a Bohemian forest. It was very satisfying to see how much work can be done when you bring together many hands and good spirit.



VOLUNTEERING WEEKENDS IN NATURE

One of the most exciting things you do during your EVS is **discovering the new country** you live in: its culture and traditions, the historical places, its nature and landscape, the people and their lifestyles.

We found in the Czech Republic a great way to do all those things and to contribute to the environmental and heritage protection at the same time: we spent part of our free time participating in '**Action Nature weekends**'. But what is exactly this magical recipe that lets you jump into the Czech culture in one weekend?



Action Nature is a programme run by **Hnutí Brontosaurus (HB)**, a youth Czech environmental NGO and member organisation of YEE. Apart from the Action Nature, this organisation runs several other programmes of environmental education and eco-counseling and has children's clubs and volunteer free-time centres. Nowadays, HB has about 1,000 members and a large majority of the people working for Brontosaurus are volunteers.

The programme Action Nature is the best-known and the most frequent Brontosaurus activity. It consists of **volunteering weekend work camps focused on the protection of nature**. These work camps are open to the general public and are based on three pillars:

- Innovative experiences
- Non-formal education
- Meaningful work

This combination has attracted young people for decades and has many benefits for both participants and nature. The volunteers take care of many specific and protected areas and help in this way to preserve them for future generations. They devote thousands of hours to volunteer work and meanwhile **they develop their skills, competences and feelings for nature**. Besides, the volunteers are often a source of **inspiration for the general public**, they show what can be done by everyone for the protection of nature and landscape.

The work done during these weekends is very diverse, from the construction of a straw-bale house, to the planting of trees or the rebuilding of an old church. The educational part is a very important one and it usually includes a comprehensive **explanation of the meaning of the work** done and some other **traditional handcraft workshops, educative games or discussions** about environmental topics.

VOLUNTEERING WEEKENDS IN NGOs

Being a volunteer within EVS programme involves you in **full-time work for a non-profit organisation**. It should imply that you have interest in the field you are working in. If you wish, you can find, next to your work, **other ways to be active**. **Volunteering weekend is a very good example for that**. The idea is that volunteers gather for one weekend to make some work for an organisation or for environment itself.



Here in the Czech Republic various kinds of weekend work camps exist. One of those is called Tamjdem ('there we go' in English). Whereas some volunteering weekends gather mainly people from the country where they take place, Tamjdem usually welcomes as many foreigners as natives. Thus, this is a very good occasion not only to **make a useful action** but also to **meet local people and other foreign volunteers** in the country and to know that **volunteering can be fun**.

So what is Tamjdem more precisely? It is a set of activities that usually take place, twice a month from Friday evening to Sunday noon. During this time volunteers **discover and work for a Czech NGO** and have some leisure activities. The accommodation is quite simple; everybody brings sleeping bags and sleep in a big room.

Usually volunteers arrive on Friday and then discover the place, people and activities of the NGO. They work during the whole Saturday, usually it is **manual work**, and they have party or workshops at night. On Sunday morning we work or have leisure time to discover the surroundings.

This recipe is very good for a weekend. You discover places in the country where you would probably not go if it was not to give a hand to an NGO; **you get to know new organisations, new activities, new people**. You have to work outside which is nice if you usually work in an office.

It allows to have people getting in touch with work connected to environment and with a team of 10 to 15 people you can achieve something really useful in one day. Some NGOs do not always have the resources to make some practical work, thus **it is very important that volunteers do get involved** in helping them directly via the Tamjdem platform.

Tamjdem is also a very good space for **informal education**. Indeed during weekend you have to work in a team, practice a foreign language, work in a multicultural group and

carry out tasks that you might actually never do otherwise.

It can also provide an occasion to practice your organisation skills since **you can invite Tamjdem to take place in your organisation**. In that case you have to find tasks to do, prepare activities for volunteers, think about the ingredients for meals.

That is what we did in YEE – we as EVS volunteers organised Tamjdem in the place where we work. Even though this year we had to reduce the time to just one day, we managed to improve a part of the eco-centre where the office of YEE is located. The staff told us that they would have to spread this work over a week otherwise. In the evening we had a great fire camp and played games. This was a good way to meet very interesting people.

Volunteering weekends like Tamjdem are an excellent tool to **mix fun, work and have the opportunity to do something for the environment**.

The concept can really be launched by anyone motivated. The project was created in Czech Republic in 2007 by a former EVS volunteer who was inspired by a similar project during his EVS service in France. Several EVS and Czech volunteers have been taking part in the organisation of these weekends.

If you are a volunteer you can **look for volunteering weekends in you area or you can always organise them yourself**. As an organisation try to create opportunities for volunteers to do some practical work with other people.



Examples of actions	What has been done
Realisation of a green map of Prague with Auto*mat	Evaluation of several places in the city of Prague according to environmental criteria to assess their environmentally friendly level and taking pictures to gather the data in an online green map of the city.
Improvement of the eco-centre Toulcův Dvůr	Help the staff with practical work: cutting wood, rebuilding wooden stairs, clearing some parts of the park.
Gardening in Camphill Community	Planting fruit trees and making compost. Learning about anthroposophy and biodynamic agriculture.

Promoting EVS

MAKING A NEWSLETTER

One YEE office's task is to **gather information from different member organisations and spread it all over the network**. It has also the objective of **sharing information with people interested in YEE activities**. One of the tools used to fulfil both of those aims at the same time is the realisation of an **e-newsletter**.

Every two months members of the network are invited to share their experiences and projects connected to environment. Sometimes we focus on some specific topics that are important for the entire network, like the Forest Campaign or YEE's Annual Meeting. We provide information and downloadable materials linked to our projects. For example, after the youth exchange in April 2011 our e-newsletter provided links to the report and the booklet which we prepared after.



Our newsletter used to be made in printed version, but from 2011 we started the e-newsletter, **an electronic publication distributed by email**. This way we avoid using paper and transportation for delivery. It is also a more interactive method; readers can have a fast overview of the topics and just select the ones they are interested in.

Volunteers take active part in this activity and since the e-newsletter is evolving every day, volunteers have the opportunity to bring their ideas and their suggestions for improvements. The work is done by a team composed of YEE publications and promotion officer, the EVS volunteers and the office team. Volunteers can train their facilitating and coordinating skills and the organisation can make them responsible for this action.

To realise an e-newsletter, **you only need a topic, an application to make it and one to send it**. It is always nicer if you include **visual elements**. It might be good to consider the layout and use colours that represent your organisation. Pictures and topics should be clearly linked. The e-newsletter should not be overcharged and the subjects easy to get.

What do you need?

- Topics to talk about and articles connected to it
- Visual elements
- An application to make the e-newsletter
- An application to send it to a large amount of email addresses

The application we chose, Mail Chimp, permits you to both make the e-newsletter and send it to many people.

To create an e-newsletter it might be good to consider some points:

- The **layout and colours used** should recall the organisation's usual design.
- The **connection between pictures and topic should be clear**. And pictures should be high quality.
- The **content should be clear** and the e-newsletter should not be overcharged. To avoid it we insert only the title and a short description of our articles and add a link to see them online.
- A **contact person** should be easy to reach.
- Places where you can consult the e-newsletter do not have to only be email boxes. We insert it on our website and our Facebook Page.
- Follow up your subscribers' activity. Mail Chimp can for example help you with that.



USING SOCIAL NETWORKS

Social networks are becoming more and more popular. Nowadays, it is quite difficult to find someone who doesn't have a personal profile, for example, on Facebook, and uses it to communicate with his or her friends and to be informed about what is going on.

That is why **social networks are today a good way for promoting an organisation and its activities and for disseminating the results of events and projects**. There are many different types of social networks. YEE decided to go for a Facebook Page that is managed by EVS volunteers and where they can also share their activities. They work to keep it active and with new fans every day.

Via social networks you can **inform your contacts about events** and topics you consider important by writing articles and adding pictures. It is a place where you can **express yourself in an informal way** and create a more convivial atmosphere than on an official website. To increase the number of people becoming fans of our Facebook Page we try to **tag the people who appear in our pictures**. You can even have interaction with your visitors by inviting them to discuss on your page.



Social networks can serve as a promotional tool. You can **invite people to an event**, dedicating a section to it where you can display information, receive answers and exchange impressions. Since it reaches a large amount of people, it also allows you to disseminate the results of your projects easily. We, for example, post all the reports from our projects. You can also present new information regularly. We always add a link to our e-Newsletter on our wall and **describe activities and projects that EVS volunteers are involved in**. You can also make your website more visible by linking articles and news from it to your social network. Organisations that you support can also be promoted through your wall.

Ask your EVS volunteers to take care of your Facebook Page. It is an easy and enjoyable task that can **bring them closer to your organisation's members and friends** and help them to **develop their communication skills**.

SHARING MEMORIES

Each EVS project is unique, consists of very special learning experience and brings to the volunteer and the organisation very particular results and memories. **It is important to keep memories of EVS volunteers and their projects**. That is why YEE documents the history of hosting volunteers and tries to improve the project taking under consideration previous experiences.

As YEE hosts volunteers already for many years, there have been more than 15 volunteers who did their project in this organisation. To collect their impressions and to give them the space to share their memories, YEE team decided to create **a special section at our website called 'Volunteers in YEE'**. This is a space where volunteers can express their **memories from the project** and share the results of their project. Through this way we can thank volunteers for joining YEE and show how their projects were useful for the organisation and for the environment. Current volunteers can name in this section the activities and projects they are involved in.

For volunteers who are interested in our project or organisation and would like to cooperate with us it is a way how to get more information about our experience with hosting volunteers.

In the profile of each volunteer we decided to include:

- Basic information about the volunteer
- Picture of the volunteer
- Impressions of the volunteer from the project
- List of the most important tasks and projects that the volunteer took part in (we write it in the form of thanking for the help with these activities)
- Few pictures that illustrate the project and variety of activities

Check memories of EVS volunteers in YEE:

www.yeenet.eu/index.php/evs/previous-evs



WRITING A BLOG

An important part of nowadays communication passes through internet. You can find there different ways to promote your projects and actions. One of the solutions we decided to use in YEE is the **realisation of a blog**. Through it EVS volunteers present projects they have taken part in.



Having a section of YEE website devoted especially to current volunteers, allows them to **speak about their actions**. In this blog they can describe the activities they took part in and share their impressions. They can therefore **bring a more concrete idea about what their EVS project is all about**. Potential EVS volunteers can then have an opinion from those who are currently living their EVS project.

It can be interesting for both the organisation and the volunteers to have reflections about how everybody lived a project. The **learning process might be easier** for the volunteers if they have time to sit down and really **think about what they did and learnt**. Communicating about it can then be better and bring a clear idea to others. It can also be a pleasure to share their experiences. In case the organisation is hosting the blog on its own website, it can be a way to attract more visitors.

What you need is a place to insert your blog on internet, a topic to talk about (for example EVS project or volunteering) and a target group to talk to. Do not hesitate to use **medias, like pictures or videos and extra sources** like links to other websites.

Visit our EVS blog and learn more about projects that EVS volunteers joined:

www.yeenet.eu/index.php/evs/evs-blog

RECORDING AUDIO DOCUMENTATION

To promote volunteering you can make an **audio record to put regularly on the internet: podcasts**. This is a useful tool to share opinions about topics you like and results of EVS project. It can be presented on the website of your organisation, its blog or even other website.

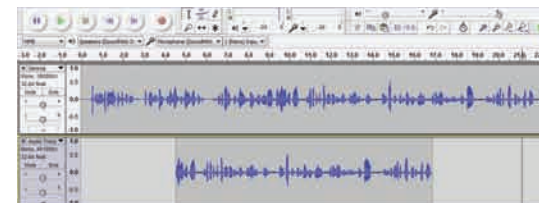
There is a wide range of topics you can use. You can talk about **your work, your activities or any aspect of your project**. It should reflect what an EVS project is composed of. An EVS volunteer in YEE presented for example the city of Prague, EVS trainings, volunteering weekends, the culture in Prague. It allowed them, other EVS volunteers and the sending organisation which organised the web radio, to **express their impressions about the country they were living in**.

You can of course use it in your activities or to **promote the protection of environment**. We, for example, made interviews with the participants at our Annual Meeting.

The way we did it followed these steps:

Recording: Try to find a suitable place for what you want to record avoiding external noises. You can use your computer or a recording device.

Editing: You can use your application's effects option in order to customise your audio file. There are many different ones on the internet. However, since Audacity is free and permits you to record and edit the material we recommend you to use it.



Upload it online: You can for example upload it on websites like Youtube or insert it directly on your website.

Some advice:

- **Pay attention to your surroundings** to be sure that only what you want to record will be indeed recorded.
- Make sure that the person recorded has a **good diction** and that we can understand her or him.
- If you interview someone, **be prepared** and know what you want to ask in advance. If you record yourself, write what you want to say before recording it.

Listen to audio files from our EVS project here (in French):

www.crij-haute-normandie.org/-Parlez-moi-d-Europe---Saison-3.html

PROMOTING THROUGH INFO STANDS

Fairs, markets, exhibitions and other local events are a great occasion for EVS volunteers to **promote the protection of environment, their organisation and their EVS project**. It is as well a good opportunity to **get to know other organisations and volunteers and set some personal or working connections**.

YEE office takes part every year in many events like the NGO market, the Earth Day or the volunteering work promotion fair, where we prepare our stand and promote our projects and activities in various ways. EVS volunteers are fully involved in the preparation of these events, taking part in the selection of promotional materials presented, deciding which information will be spread and the workshops and activities that will be run. Then, during the event they speak to public about their EVS project and activities of the organisation.

All the experiences we had attending fairs, markets and other events helped us to improve the way we promote and present YEE and its activities. Below you can find some ideas and advice that can be useful if you are planning to prepare a promotional stand.

Make it visual! Call people's attention with colorful posters, dynamic pictures and other eye-catching promotional materials. Make it easy for visitors to understand what you are doing by showing it in postcards or pointing in a world map where are you and the members of your organisation from. In YEE stand you can find:

- Picture exhibition from the activities EVS volunteers did
- Computer with the website of the organisation and the EVS blog opened
- All team wearing YEE T-shirt

Make it interactive! You can attract visitors to your stand by preparing workshops or playing games with them. Share your skills, encourage people to try to make handicrafts



with you. Be creative and make up games to help people to discover your organisation. Make them interact with each other and prepare activities that they could share in groups. For example in YEE stand we prepared:

- A handicraft workshop with recycled materials
- A shared collage with pieces of nature
- A quiz about our organisation

Don't forget to tell all the members of your organisation, other volunteers and friends to visit the event and your stand. And last but very important tip: **be enthusiastic when you speak about what you do**. Even if you have the coolest leaflets and the best posters ever, what you say and how you express it will be the image visitors will keep of you and your organisation.

PRESENTING EVS DURING PROJECTS

YEE organises every year many international and local events. EVS volunteers join many of them. It is a very good occasion to speak about EVS project and activities of volunteers and explain the purpose of EVS. That is why usually volunteers present their project at the beginning of the event or have a special session for the presentation included in the programme. After such presentation participants can approach volunteers and ask them personally about their EVS project. The meetings with EVS volunteers usually encourage many people to think about participating in the programme. Life examples of volunteers give people a clearer idea about EVS and make people more interested in this opportunity.

Promoting EVS during projects of the organisation is not only a good way for participants to get to know this volunteering opportunity. It is also a perfect occasion for EVS volunteers **to practice their presentation skills and share results of their project**. They can try various creative ways of presentation: showing pictures from their project, making PowerPoint presentation about activities they did or using some creative ways of presenting (theatre, story telling, visual materials, etc.).

Encourage volunteers to speak about their project. It will help them to reflect on what they achieved and to practice how to make an interesting presentation. People from your organisation and participants of your projects will understand better the role of volunteers and hopefully will feel encouraged to join EVS or host EVS volunteers.





EVS YEE memories

FRANCESCO

During my EVS I did not actually plant any trees or save from extinction any endangered rare turtle species: not personally, at least. Most of my work in YEE was about people and trying to make them more aware about the environment we are living in. This is important as well: humans are the animal species with the heaviest footprint on nature so if they behave more responsibly, our planet will last longer. So, in my opinion, keeping people informed and raising their awareness about environmental issues is a crucial task in protecting the environment. This is why I think that the months I spent in YEE were useful for the environment.

It may sound strange, but even taking care of the organisation's Facebook Page can be a small step towards nature protection: you're sitting there, maybe wasting time, browsing through your friends' posts, and then you stumble upon an interesting article, a video, or just a picture and you can learn, you can reflect on your current behavior and decide to change it bit by bit to make it more responsible.

I could not choose just one among the activities I took part in, I think they were all important in different ways and each of them was part of the experience. Anyway, dealing directly with people is more enjoyable than working in front of your computer; so, my favourite memories are linked to the Annual Meeting, or to a volunteering weekend. Which are, occasions when you can really talk to people, share experiences and make plans for future projects.



Volunteering experience was important for me, because I had the possibility to work in an autonomous way, in a friendly and positive environment, and work at the same time on environmental protection and international cooperation, two things I care a lot about. And, last but not least, when you're a volunteer you easily make friends... and when friendship is based on common values and a shared vision of the world, it lasts longer!

*Francesco Ballone, Italy
EVS volunteer in YEE 2010*

GOSIA

When I started my EVS project in YEE, I didn't know much about environmental protection or environmental education. After one year as EVS volunteer in Youth and Environment Europe I was able to measure the quality of water, make environmental games for children, make newsletter about environmental projects and properly recycle trash.

Working in the network of environmental youth organisations made me more aware of environmental problems but what is more important – it gave me many ideas what we can do about it. Just during my EVS project I created 3 magazines (on Eco-houses, Biodiversity and Peace and environment) and 2 newsletters to inform about environmental actions and projects, postcard book to inform about renewable energies, I helped in the farm and with environmental programmes for Czech children. And these are only few examples of activities from my EVS project.

The climax of my project was helping to organise a youth exchange 'Learning from each other'. This youth exchange gave me the strongest feeling of doing something useful for environment. It was a project where youth environmental organisations were exchanging their methods of work. I saw many various ways of speaking about environment, showing the nature, waking up the respect and feeling for it. Such energy inspires people to pass methods further and use them in practice.

My project was very interesting and useful because I had a possibility to try various activities and set my learning goals. It is also very important to see the results of your work and feel that it is needed and appreciated. I tried to speak about my project a lot and share my experience with other people. Maybe that is also why the EVS project in which I participated was nominated for European Youth Awards in 2011.

I took a lot from one year in YEE, I also hope I gave a lot. I tried to be useful and YEE started to be really important for me – the organisation where you feel needed and you do things that make sense. I think the EVS project in YEE is perfect for people with initiative, who want to learn a lot and constantly ask questions.

*Gosia Zubowicz-Thull, Poland
EVS volunteer in YEE 2008/2009*



SEBASTIAN



During my volunteering project in Youth and Environment Europe my tasks included working in an ecologically-oriented kindergarten, in a youth-centre for Roma and organising a small festival with intercontinental music and food. The main tasks, however, were connected to the environment: I helped in organising an international conference on biodiversity, at the end of which a resolution was passed to the United Nations, and in strengthening the cooperation between YEE and partner

organisations. Our most important tool for raising awareness, though, were probably the publications, the 'Youth and Environment' magazine and the newsletter. For the magazine we edited issues related to specific environmental topics, which included looking for experts to contribute with articles, adapting or translating information, and doing the layout. In the latter, we focused on environmental issues that were current at the moment of writing, as well as on introducing our member organisations.

On a local level, we also organised some smaller events for Czech youth and children, including planting trees and game-activities to get familiar with the importance of nature. These events had the advantage of seeing concrete results, as well as of increasing sensitivity to environmental concerns in the next generation in a natural way.

The time as a volunteer was very important for me for a number of reasons. I met great people and made many unique experiences, as well as learned many things on a whole range of issues, from Czech language to how an international NGO works. By meeting people from different continents at different training courses in different countries, my mind got broadened on how society and life in different countries look like. By very diverse aspects of the work in the office I learned many practical things, and of course also organising events and spending time with children had learning effects, as well as the leisure time after work.

*Sebastian Nießen, Germany
EVS volunteer in YEE 2007/2008*



MELANIE

My EVS project is indirectly useful for environment since it was based on the information. Still, I'm convinced that improving knowledge, and coordinating the environmental organisations all over Europe has repercussions on the environment, since it influences people's behaviour, which is the key to the change!

The project that was for me the most relevant was the meeting of people interested in renewable energies during the Annual Meeting of Youth and Environment Europe. Not only I discovered a lot about the team work but also about technical hemp. It raised my interest and curiosity for that topic and I still have interest in it and communicate with people about its potential and agronomical advantages in my everyday life. Thanks to that, I found a job in relation to the hemp business, after my EVS.

The volunteering experience is very important in my life for many reasons. Having a year to be able to focus on what is important for you, what motivates you in life without having the professional and financial pressure is a gift. Like every experience, it broadens your mind and sometimes clarifies your vision of your future. Right after the programme, I stayed in the country and have been able to work in the field of hemp technologies, in link with my country of origin. EVS is meant to develop cooperation between European countries, I am glad and proud that I could go on that idea.

I also kept in touch with one organisation and have been present on some actions, to contribute with my dynamism to the effort of information on environmental issues.

*Melanie Ruppe, France
EVS volunteer in YEE 2006/2007*



Other EVS projects

INTERNATIONAL YOUNG NATUREFRIENDS CZECH REPUBLIC

I was one of the two EVS volunteers in International Young Naturefriends, which associates Young Naturefriends and their organisations through its networking programmes and offers various projects with the methodology of experiential and intercultural education. The most significant values are respect, equality, solidarity, sustainability and love and care for nature.

My project was not a typical EVS, because the majority of it I spent in the office, but we also travelled a lot. We were writing and sending out digital newsletters, editing the hard-copy magazine, writing or translating articles, contributing to a bigger publication called Yearbook, taking care of office work or teambuilding events, coordinating the admission of participants and helping our colleagues to organise youth exchanges or trainings and then assisted at leading them. Besides, we designed and promoted the new 'green and eco' IYNF T-shirts with the statement: 'naturefriend inside'.

2010 was titled Green year in IYNF; 3 'green' projects happened and we were in many ways helping and participating in them. The first one was called Green Campaigning and was addressed to youth workers or volunteers interested in making eco-campaigns. The second one – Green Games – was for those who wish to implement the games in nature and about nature in the programme of their workshops. The last one – Born to be wild – took place in a camp site in nature, which was the main inspiration to learn how to make everyday lifestyle more sustainable. These experiences raised our awareness on environmental problems and encouraged us to become more and more eco-friendly. Besides,



new ideas appeared in our organisation and its plans for future, what, I believe, is the most significant result of such actions; when some follow up occurs and we can see how wide and diverse the outcomes of our efforts get.

*Anna Swetnik, Poland
EVS volunteer 2009/2010*

www.iynf.org

ZÁKLADNÍ ČLÁNEK HB BOTIČ CZECH REPUBLIC

The organisation where I did my EVS project is active in the field of environmental education. Since 1996 they work in the environmental educational centre Toulcův Dvůr, which is a unique historical farmstead in the suburbs of Prague with 8,5 hectares of green areas like an orchard, fields, gardens, pastures and a wetland. It also includes a small city farm in which they raise animals, mainly for educational purposes.

The organisation realises around 550 environmental educational programmes for school children every year. Furthermore, they organise several actions for public focused on raising environmental awareness, like Earth Day, and reviving of folk traditions and handy-crafts, like Easter and Christmas markets and workshops on e.g. weaving baskets.

In the project I had a variety of tasks, from preparing materials for environmental education activities for children, to taking care of horses. I was in contact with children, animals and people involved in environmental protection. With them I developed my sensibility towards environment and I can say that it was a life-changing experience. Besides, I had the opportunity to get closer to farm life and to learn more about environmental education strategies.

One amazing thing was that I had the chance to be actively involved in environmental education and sustainability by developing my own project, which consisted in a permaculture (an ecological design system) garden, introducing a new way of agriculture in the farm.

*Antonieta Lopes, Portugal
EVS volunteer 2010/2011*

www.toulcuvdvur.cz



SFERA BAIKAL NATURE RESERVE, RUSSIA

One of my main tasks during the EVS was to lead an international work camp. Baikal shore is full of garbage and it is an issue in this beautiful area. That is why the topic of the camp was: 'Clean Lake Baikal and promotion of recycling among the local inhabitants'. Baikal Biosphere Reserve initiated a recycling programme a year ago. However, local people still don't participate very much. During two weeks of the work camp we cleaned the shore and streets of the village and we did a survey about how the inhabitants deal with their garbage. Our promotion group made signs 'Keep Baikal clean', which we positioned on the shore and in the picnic area. Additionally, they also drew signs for recycling garbage bins located in the school area.

Parallel with the camp, an International Summer Ecological School took place here. Together with students we produced different products from the garbage. For example, paper baskets and paper bowls, aluminum candleholders, recycled paper and wallets and little boxes from tetra pak.

Another activity during my EVS was building an ornithological station, specifically the net for catching birds. This was part of the migratory birds' research.

Furthermore, I visited all three national parks in the Baikal area. Here, I interviewed the employees about their volunteering programmes, environmental education and sustainable tourism activities. I shared with them my experience in these areas from work in a German national park. The collected information serves for the Baikal Biosphere Reserve for cooperation and as an inspiration for their own activities.

In cooperation with the environmental educational department, I prepared a workshop for them focusing on educational games in the forest played during the students' excursions. Also, a new boardwalk was built and I helped with the content of interpretive panels.

*Vladimira Lackova, Slovakia
EVS volunteer 2011*

www.dobrovolets.ru



GEPEC-EDC SPAIN

GEPEC-EdC works in the environmental field covering various areas on the Tarragona Mediterranean Coast: control and study of the local fauna and flora, management of various environmental education programmes for schools.

GEPEC-EdC is actively involved in issues related to the 'urban' ecology, such as the environmental control of the petrochemical, nuclear and wind industries, house building and communication and transport infrastructures.

In my EVS project I worked in nature beach close to town Torredembarra named Els Muntanyans, where me, other EVS volunteers and local volunteers did counting of lizards, a study of attendance of people in nature space, inspection of mosquito larvae, a study of the volume of sand on the beach. I took there many photos of local fauna and flora for my organisation. We prepared also teaching materials for environmental education programmes. Then we realised some of these programmes. I created short instructing films from work of volunteers. We also wrote a script for puppet theatre about nature beach and we made the puppets.

In other parts of Tarragona region we planted trees few times, we participated in 2 markets of environmental organisations. We prepared some basis for the guide for blind people of one nature trail. We also created one model of other nature trail for blind people.

This project was useful for me because I was quite free with the choice of activities, I could choose between a lot of possibilities. I did not have a lot of experience in environmental work before and in this way I could try many different things and then decide which ones I prefer. I could also see various ways of work. I learned there to be more independent.

Jana Javorska
EVS volunteer 2009/2010

www.gepec.org



ECOMISSION 21ST CENTURY BULGARIA

'We don't own the world, we just rent it from our grandchildren' – says the famous proverb. We, here in Ecomission 21st Century, think and believe in this saying and our mission is to teach the children from the very beginning how to enjoy, how to love and how to protect the environment. And Bulgaria is just the perfect place to show them that it is really worth to take care about nature. The country is rich in mountains, valleys and lakes, having border with the Black Sea – these are treasures to conserve through many generations. Our organisation year by year hosts EVS volunteers to carry these environment related tasks.

The EVS project I took part in involved organising camps for children, drawing courses, art ateliers with eco materials and creating a group of active kids called 'Friends of nature'. As EVS volunteers, we can bring new colors to the local society, open a new window to other nations and find very often a funny way to communicate without speaking the same language. This is challenging, entertaining but also very responsible task.

When we got to know the city and the local community better, we also organised a common gardening day to rearrange a small area behind our office, planting different flowers and plants and we organised a group of children to take care of this very unique garden.

We encouraged children to show their love and way of thinking about the nature. We released a contest for them to make drawings of River Osam according to how it changes season by season. As the result we got a calendar that reminds everyone that we live in such a peaceful and beautiful city that deserves to be conserved for the future.

Nikolett Kekesi, Hungary
EVS volunteer

www.ecomission21.com



GAIA ALENTEJO PORTUGAL

The Convergence Centre project exists since 2007 in Aldeia das Amoreiras, a small village in the rural South of Portugal. It is the outcome of the campaign against desertification and depopulation of rural areas, lead by GAIA Group of Action and Environmental Intervention, environmental non-governmental organisation in Portugal.

Since 2007 we have hosted eight EVS volunteers, from Slovenia, France, Russia, Belgium, the Netherlands, Spain and soon we will welcome two more volunteers coming from Peru. EVS volunteers join the group of young Portuguese activists at the Convergence Centre and bring along new dynamics and multiculturalism into the daily life of a small village. They support GAIA's work, in the sense of seeking a higher value to local knowledge, the empowerment of the village people and the enhancement of the community's cohesion and self-sufficiency. GAIA's intervention in rural Portugal, in particular in the village of Aldeia das Amoreiras, is thus directed to the transition of rural communities into clusters of people that are self-determined and sustainable at social, economic and environmental levels.

GAIA Alentejo is also an active sending organisation. In May 2011 eight Portuguese volunteers departed for one year to Ecuador, to be EVS volunteers at the Ecuadorian Seed Guardians network (www.redsemillas.org). This is a concrete example of how a volunteering project contributes to the conservation of natural resources and how it can link to other initiatives and expand its potentialities. In order to prepare the volunteers prior to their departure, GAIA organised a Seeds Market in the village Aldeia das Amoreiras. Portuguese volunteers are in Ecuador in different agroecological farms, which collect and farm with traditional seeds, thus contributing to preserve biodiversity locally. Some of them are already planning to come back to their family farm in Portugal and apply agroecology and seeds guarding.

These young people and many more have contributed or are contributing in this moment with their hands and motivation to the conservation of natural resources. GAIA Alentejo facilitates and will continue facilitating young active citizens who dream about a more fair and sustainable society.



Sara Serrão – EVS Coordinator in GAIA Alentejo
alentejo@gaia.org.pt
www.gaia.org.pt

ECO-INITIATIVE ASSOCIATION POLAND

Eco-Initiative Association is a non-governmental organisation working in the area of environmental education, environmental protection and social animation. Mission of our association is 'Ecology with and for people in Kwidzyn'.

In my project I was teaching pupils how to be environmentally friendly in their everyday life (different workshops and activities) so that they would think more about global problems and how they can change the situation on their own. I also prepared some actions for people from the town to encourage them to change their lifestyle and at least segregate trash and make other small things that should be natural in today's life.



I also tried to change the way of thinking of my Polish colleagues and friends, so I told them about positive practices that we have in Estonia and that they could also try to use in Poland (different segregation system, more e-documents and less printing in the office). Main activities that I did were:

- Making new paper out of old one and telling how the paper is made in big factories and why it is important not to waste it;
- Hydro biological workshops about life in the rivers in Poland and how pollution impacts it (decreasing habitats and biological diversity, etc.), what people can do in their everyday life to avoid polluting rivers (not to use washing-powder and other cleaners, that contain phosphates; not to throw poison liquids into sink or toilet);
- Environmental-theatre about some important environmental problems in local community during pupils' winter holidays;
- Workshop on how to make new things out of old newspapers, juice boxes, plastic bottles and T-shirts.

Mali Lehtpuu, Estonia
 EVS volunteer

wolontariat@ekokwidzyn.pl
www.ekokwidzyn.pl



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Youth and Environment Europe (YEE) is an umbrella organisation uniting European environmental youth non-governmental organisations. Since its foundation in 1983, YEE has been a platform for many organisations that study nature and are active in the field of environmental protection.

The aim of YEE is to provide a platform where these organisations can cooperate and to encourage youth to be involved in environmental protection. YEE creates an opportunity to contact other European organisations, to exchange experiences, ideas and to work together.

Find out more about YEE at www.yeenet.eu

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Youth and Environment Europe has been hosting EVS volunteers since 2001. After so many years of involving volunteers in our projects, the European Year of Volunteering seemed a perfect occasion to present how EVS volunteers can be active for the environment.

Read about experience of our EVS volunteers. Check which activities can be done for the environment. Discover the potential of EVS projects to raise awareness about it.

Enjoy reading our booklet and get inspired by EVS projects that help the environment!

