

EVS Realm: Masters of the Learning Path

DRAFT Recommendations for improved ESC Quality (October 2018)



The following recommendations have been compiled as a result of the activities conducted as part of the EVS Realm Erasmus + project 2017-2019 (see Annex 1). They provide suggestions on how to improve the quality of European Solidarity Corps (ESC) long-term, full-time volunteering experiences both in-country and cross-border, with a particular focus on the crucial role of mentors, and others involved in supporting roles, in ensuring that volunteers have a successful and impactful placement. More details about the context, history and practice of ESC can be found in Annex 2. The recommendations target the actors involved in the implementation of the ESC and the mentoring process: the organisations, the volunteers, the mentors, the National Agencies and the European institutions. For additional details and explanation of the recommendations see Annex 3. More detailed analysis of the situation in the four countries engaged in the project can be found in Annex 4.

1. Redefining the terminology and structure of the mentoring process

1.1 Clarification on the role and a common understanding of the profile and competencies needed to be involved in the ESC mentoring process should be developed, mentors informed about it, and knowledge and practice of it for sending, hosting and co-ordinating organisations become a component of the ESC Quality label.

1.2 Role profiles should be created to define at least two distinct support person roles. One, to pay attention to guide volunteers through the integration process, eg. show them around, introduce them to the culture, support them in administrative, technical and practical needs in the community, and another to support the learning and personal development process.

1.3 Adequate training for anyone involved in the mentoring process should be provided via the ESC portal and/ or in face-to-face opportunities offered by NAs, including focus on their role, intercultural learning, validation of non-formal and informal learning and other elements such as language and health & wellbeing etc. The training should lead to an ESC mentor certification, if the mentor desires.

2. Resource allocation for the mentoring process

2.1 Organisations should be provided with additional dedicated funds to be able to organise pre and post-placement meetings with their mentors and others involved in the support process, in addition to during the placement itself. More synergies between National and Regional level full time volunteering schemes and ESC should be made, leading to a more flexible and coordinated approach, including in relation to mentoring and other support mechanisms.

2.2 An online peer learning “community of practice” for people involved in the mentoring process for ESC members should be developed in order that knowledge and practice about mentorship in ESC can continue to develop. This should be available at both National and EU levels and be supported by annual meetings at national level for people involved in the mentoring process. Its implementation should be monitored by the ESC Resource Centre or other entity responsible for monitoring ESC implementation.

2.3 A specific budget devoted to the constant improvement and coordination of the mentoring process should be allocated at centralised level, including for the online “Community of practice”, and with sufficient funds for all training and certification of ESC mentors and other support persons.

3. Connection between the projects and the real societal needs

3.1 ESC volunteers should undertake their activities in projects that are designed to be implemented alongside local volunteers to ensure that they gain a better understanding of the local volunteering reality, contribute to the real local needs through local volunteering objectives, and gain a greater understanding of how volunteering in free-time can be part of their own post-placement lifestyle.

3.2 Post-placement integration and adjustment should be better supported through increased integration in the hosting local community that permits the volunteers to maintain a link outside the direct volunteering placement experience. The role of the mentor and other support person should provide adequate support in this regard.