



# ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION & EUROPEAN VOLUNTEERING: Encouraging the youth to contribute to the success of the Green Deal



## About the project

European Volunteers for the Environment (EVE) is a 30-month project implemented under the Erasmus+ Programme and it involves a partnership of four organisations from different European countries (Pistes-Solidaires from France, Replay Network from Italy, Hub Nicosia from Cyprus and Solidarity Tracks from Greece).



## Context

The Green Deal launched by President Von der Leyen echoes the growing environmental awareness and the need to provide answers to climate change.



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It is up to each and everyone of us to achieve the transition to a carbon -neutral society by changing our daily habits: the way we produce and consume, the way we heat or cool our homes, the way we travel, etc.

The success of the Green Deal will only be possible with collective action. European volunteering is a sector that can actively contribute to this, particularly because young people are motivated and wish for their voices to be heard. This is the ambition of Youth Goal 10 and an axis of the European Youth Strategy. Young people have expressed their desire to play a more active role in this issue and wish to:

### *Understand:*

to have trustworthy sources of information adapted to young people.

### *Learn:*

to benefit from environmental and sustainable development education for young people within youth organisations (and in other settings).

### *Act:*

Increase opportunities for environmental volunteering and support youth-led initiatives for the environment and climate change.



## *Project Result 1*

EVE envisions to help the youth with what has been mentioned above. In order to achieve that, the project's first output aimed to understand better the views of volunteers and youth workers regarding the Green Deal and the current role of sustainability in European projects. For this purpose, each partner country disseminated a questionnaire to current or past ESC/EVS volunteers in their national context and then also organised two different focus groups: one with volunteers and another one with tutors and youth workers involved in this kind of projects. Cyprus and France held an additional focus group each; Cyprus had the task to appeal to tutors and youth workers from other European countries, ones that are not included in the project's partnership while France had the task to appeal to volunteers with the same background.

As far as Cyprus is concerned, Hub Nicosia disseminated the questionnaire and received **20 responses** from current or past volunteers involved in ESC (or previously EVS) projects. This was preceded by an online focus group with volunteers where **4 people** participated in total. After this, the organisation held two more focus groups. The one appealed to local youth workers and mentors and had a participation of **4 people** and the other one appealed to European tutors and youth workers and only **1 person** participated there.



## Key findings

### VOLUNTEERS:

Volunteers were mostly familiar with the Green Deal and knew what it entails (60%). They mentioned that they occasionally had the chance to be involved in an environmental activity during their volunteering experience. The responses they gave indicated that these activities evolved around the common environmental initiatives that we see being implemented too often, like beach clean ups or recycling workshops. 59% of volunteers indicated that the environmental education activity was included in the programme and 41% said that it was initiated by themselves or other volunteers.



Overall, volunteers value the importance of environmental education, and they would like to see it having a greater presence in volunteering projects. In order for this to happen, volunteers are convinced that they should receive greater support from hosting organisations, and they should receive more resources and ideas from National Agencies on the topic. Moreover, they believe that there should be workshops in place to train mentors and youth workers in order for them to acquire more formal skills and knowledge on the subject so that they could in turn aid the volunteers with the topic of sustainability and put it in the context of the area in which their volunteering project is taking place.

## YOUTH WORKERS AND MENTORS:

Youth workers and mentors are convinced about the great potential of the volunteers to bring about positive change. They believe that the cultural diversity of a group of volunteers can lead to an exchange of ideas and to the implementation of powerful initiatives that could contribute significantly to the Green Deal's success. Nevertheless, they believe that it is a long way to go until sustainability achieves the recognition it requires in terms of its presence in European voluntary programmes.

More specifically, the respondents of the focus groups think that often sustainability is not seen as a priority since the projects might have a completely different topic. They proposed however, to equip youth workers and mentors with the necessary resources in order to be able to link other social topics with the subject of the environment. Youth workers and mentors should have readily available resources in order to create workshops and offer the appropriate help to the volunteers. They would also like to receive more trainings on the topic, preferably from experts, in order to acquire the necessary knowledge and have the competences to educate volunteers on this topic.

Moreover, they mentioned that sustainability should be formally incorporated into the Activity Agreement of the volunteers so that hosting organisations would respect its importance. Finally, they even suggested to include a section with "environmental skills" in the Youth Pass and encourage volunteers to consider sustainability while realising their personal projects.

<https://www.volunteers4environment.eu/>



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