

**Youth in Action Programme  
The European Voluntary Service**

**10 Years of Solidarity and Active Citizenship  
26 -27 November**

Table discussion moderated by Jens Mester, European Commission  
Minutes taken by Agnes Uhreczky, AVSO

**Summary:**

4 main points can be highlighted that emerged from the presentation of Jens Mester of the new programme, as well as the questions and comments made by the participants:

1. In the future programme there will be no distinction between different project formats (e.g. one-to-one, Europe-wide, etc.). The new rule says, that one project can have one or several activities – meaning up to 100 volunteers per activity and project. In one deadline, one application promoters may introduce one single project with only one volunteer, or one project with up to 100 volunteers, or several activities, meaning different countries, different number of volunteers in one project.
2. A new feature of the programme is the Activity Agreement. By the submission of the application all partner organisations have to be identified, but applicants do not need to identify the volunteers – this can happen after the project has been approved. Once the volunteer is identified the different parties in the project (namely the sending, the hosting and the coordination organisations as well as the volunteer) have to sign an Activity Agreement, which contains all the practical and financial information of the project, the tasks and responsibilities of each counterpart, the sharing of the grant, as well as serves as a proof of commitment to the project. A copy of this has to be sent to the National Agency or the Executive Agency in Brussels in case of a European level project. The PPA (Preliminary Partnership Agreement) is still part of the application form.
3. Another important aspect of the new EVS is the emphasis on the valorisation/visibility of the programme and thus the projects. It is based on the experience of the current 2000 – 2006 phase of the programme, that apart from the compulsory reports many project results are not sufficiently used and disseminated.. The Commission encourages and requires a more thorough and tangible exploitation and dissemination of project results, e.g. film, photos, blogs, testimonials and any other material that contributes to the visibility and valorisation of the project and the programme as well. This will also show the benefits of the programme and help future political decisions..
4. There is a general increase in the Youth in Action budget, as well as a steady increase for EVS from 2007 on each year. In the first year of the new programme, the EVS budget is similar to 2006 and first organisations are called on to improve the rate of absorbing the EVS funds that have not been spent to 100% before. More promotion of EVS is needed to make more potential users aware of it – notably in the new member states. In this light it is important to

encourage the participation of new organisations as well as improving the efficiency of organisations with long-standing experience with the programme.

### **Detailed account of the table discussions:**

Jens Mester, member of staff of DG EAC responsible for EVS first gave a brief run-through of the new 2007-2013 programme phase of the Youth in Action Programme, stressing that the Commission and the Executive Agency are ready to start the new programme by January as well as the National Agencies will be able to start in due time. The first year will be a learning curve for everyone participating in the programme, and the Commission plans to evaluate the programme in the second half of 2007 to share experiences and make improvements, adjustments to it if needed.

The **General priorities** of the programme are the following:

- European Citizenship
- Participation of young people (political message)
- Cultural diversity (anti-racism, antidiscrimination)
- Inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities (inclusion strategy)

As well as there will be Annual priorities, for the 2007 programme year they are the following:

- Equal opportunities (gender balance, anti-discrimination, inclusion of disadvantaged young people)
- Improvement of young people's health (Mainstream youth activities, sports, outdoor activities are encouraged)
- Action 5.1. – Structured dialogue: social inclusion and diversity (Active dialogue between young people and policy makers on national, regional and local level).

Respecting the priorities of the programme and adjusting your project to them will enhance the chances of getting the projects funded. National Agencies in special cases might also set their own priorities, for example if there is a white area on the country map for EVS projects or to encourage certain projects targeting special needs – this is one of the planning tools for the National Agencies, but given they are fully transparent about them towards the promoters. Another aspect why it is important to get in touch with your National Agencies during the preparation of your projects!

The **submission of the applications** will depend on the applicant organisation. Local, regional and national level organisations have to submit their application to the National Agencies. International organisations and projects that are linked to a major European level event like the Culture Capital of Europe or a European sports event have to submit the application to the Executive Agency in Brussels.

Jens Mester encouraged the participants to seek active dialogue with their granting Agency before the submission of the application, to get validation and advise on their projects. Also to make sure that all the new elements, such as the visibility aspect of the projects are in place.

The **programme** has been greatly **simplified**, with the new single rule being the number of volunteers, 1-100. This offers a new possibility to organisations to combine several projects, activities in one project and concentrate them for one deadline. This allows organisations to plan better ahead. Of course also projects with only 1 activity, even one volunteer are encouraged, since in most cases these are submitted by organisations new to the programme.

For projects aimed at **young people** at risk and **disadvantaged**, there is some flexibility with the deadline for submission of the application; on short term EVS projects there is the possibility to submit the application up until one week before the regular selection panel at national level and to start the project upon signature of the financing agreement.

In terms of the **place of submission**, based on the new one project, one application principle, promoters are free to choose to which National Agency they submit their application provided that there is a clear link to this country. It will be the task and responsibility of the Commission and the National Agencies to monitor the projects and the flow of volunteers. The National Agencies and the Commission will exchange information, but there will be no regulations or quota system.

On the discussion about the **accreditation procedure** we learnt, that the accreditation procedure is a major element in ensuring the good quality of the projects and the programme. In the new phase also sending organisations and coordinating organisations will be accredited, the National Agencies will thus be able to support and monitor all potential project partners. The accreditation results will be published in the online-database and thus serve for partner-finding; therefore also the young beneficiaries of the programme will have the option to select their sending organisations on the basis of it. The accreditation process for the sending side will be lighter than the hosting side.

As mentioned before, in some Programme countries the EVS programme is not **absorbing** all the available funds, therefore the whole EVS community, meaning the Commission, the National Agencies, sending, hosting and coordinating organisations as well as the volunteers themselves have all a role to play in promoting the programme. In 2005 around 18% of the EVS budget was transferred to other actions, which was also a result of cumbersome application procedures and the split-funding approach. New additional capacity is needed to fulfil the programme, meaning all the resources are used up.

Concerning the **number of volunteers in one project** – if one National Agency receives too many big projects involving many volunteers for one deadline – it is likely that it will negotiate a cutback on the number of volunteers for each project.

Again Jens Mester stressed, that the participation in EVS remains free for the volunteer. The volunteer allowance is only a pocket money paid on top to free accommodation, travel, food, insurance etc. and should be dedicated to the volunteer's personal expenses to spend it in his/her free time on cinema, a beer...etc. If the hosting place is expensive, Agencies have the possibility to adapt the European standard rates for activity costs by up to + 1/3.

Another important **change** is the **deadlines at centralised level**, instead of the 1<sup>st</sup> November; the deadline has been advanced to the 1<sup>st</sup> September!

Last but not least, the **age of the volunteers** has been stretched to be 18-30.