



Orientation Handbook (Returned Volunteers)

A handbook for youth workers on orientation upon return from an international volunteering experience



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This tool is designed for the project

EaSY_ Evaluate Soft Skills in International Youth volunteering
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EaSY is a 24-months project funded by the Italian National Youth Agency under the ERASMUS Plus program, KA2 Strategic Partnership - Cooperation for Innovation and Exchange of Good Practices.

Through EaSY, the partnership aims to contribute to the process of recognition of skills arising from non-formal learning experiences in Europe, and in particular the cross-skills or soft skills resulting from the International Youth Volunteering.

In this project Focsiv co-operates with FEC and La Guilde Européenne du Raid, organisations with long experience in youth volunteering, and Elidea - associated psychologists.

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1. Introduction

Why has this resource been developed?

“EaSY_ Evaluate Soft skills in International Youth volunteering” is a 24-months project launched by FOCSIV in collaboration with NGOs FEC, LA GUILDE and the scientific partner ELIDEA – ASSOCIATED PSYCHOLOGISTS.

The main purpose of this project is to foster the assessment of transversal skills coming from non-formal learning, in particular from international youth volunteering.

One of the most important tools of the project is this handbook for youth workers, on youth vocational guidance after an international experience.

Who is this resource for?

This handbook has been developed for youth workers who support volunteers after their return from abroad. It is designed for volunteer return sessions and it aims to help volunteers to valorise their soft skills.

Helping volunteers to analyse the situations they experienced and the activities they carried out is a central axis of guidance throughout a mission. Sending Organisations are responsible for supporting volunteers and promoting the skills developed throughout the volunteers' missions.

Aim of the resource

This tool is intended as a manual for youth workers who want to follow some effective guidelines for supporting volunteers upon their return from a volunteering experience. Based on the experience of the organisations involved in the project, this handbook proposes vocational guidance following the approach of the Easy Model and its self-assessment test.

This guide is composed of two parts:

- A theoretical part on volunteer return and the **EaSY Soft Skills**
- A practical part with tips to incorporate the **EaSY model** within volunteer return sessions

The added value of a volunteer experience

A learning experience

The skills acquired abroad by volunteers are a real asset. Volunteers come back full of new ideas and knowledge, which are valuable opportunities for development, and can be a growth engine for the job market in their country of origin. In a changing world, volunteering is changing and the responsibility of Sending Organisations is increasingly important.

Reflecting on the potential effects of international volunteering in the subsequent career paths of young adults therefore requires considering it as an educational experience.

These qualities are part of a real professionalism that Sending Organisations must develop through pedagogical work and expertise, prior to the departure of volunteers. Indeed, these organisations play a role during the preparation for the mission, and through guidance during and after the mission. This role persists after the end of the mission through the training processes put in place during the return to their countries of origin, the networking, and their testimonies.

Indeed, volunteers, along with other expatriates, make their experience known through their professional, friends, and family networks. The impact of this international openness is thus propagated in society itself, through an awareness of development issues, migration mechanisms, etc. Volunteers provide living testimonies. They also generally continue their commitment after their return, in multiple forms, and help reflection on our own ways of living, thinking, consuming, and organising society.

Interpersonal skills are more subjective, related to the psychology of individuals, such as adaptation, openness to novelty, flexibility, or empathy. Expatriation is an experience of personal development, creating in the individual skills that are difficult to acquire in training.

Volunteers who undertake a mission abroad are strengthening their social skills, such as autonomy, communication, problem-solving skills, cultural openness and a sense of social inclusion. International mobility is a booming reality that does not always take into account everyone's individual characteristics.

In a world marked by globalisation, expatriation has often become a compulsory stage in a student's career, or in a professional career. Volunteers are actually at the heart of a complex movement. They evolve in internal progression and external discoveries. It is this ability to grow in these different directions that will help them adapt.

Expatriation is defined as a separation of the individual from his or her geographical, social and family environment, for the duration of stay abroad. Expatriates find themselves without their usual social and cultural references, having to build new ones. To expatriate oneself is also to meet a different culture through its functioning, its norms and its values.

It is about adapting quickly and well to a new country. The difficulties related to the specific country and the material conditions of life are the most obvious aspects to

consider. Faced with these difficulties, everyone does not react in the same way. Some adapt more easily than others.

Expatriates look at their environment with curiosity, which becomes an inexhaustible source of learning and opportunities. This experience, even if it is only temporary, forever marks the individual and their openness to the world, to others and to themselves. Thanks to these different adjustment tools, such as adaptability, empathy, communication and resilience, the individual feels increasingly at home in the foreign country.

Situations particular to being a foreigner in a new country favour a questioning of one's categories of thought, and in this regard, they make the experience of volunteering a period conducive to experiential learning. A volunteer experience can be considered both as a form of social experience and as an educational experience.

Different type of profiles

If the profiles of international volunteering are becoming more diversified (active, retired), young adults remain the most numerous to have this experience. Depending on their situation, the time for volunteer is different in their career, either during or at the end of their schooling, or in a period of professional integration, and in the first years of professional activity. Thus, volunteering can meet different expectations, and sometimes the motivations are much deeper than we think: Taking a step back from your family, leaving a demotivating job, demonstrating that they can go far, confronting difficult situations without help, fleeing a difficult situation...

Volunteers are often seen as young people with no experience, eager to give and become better through programs offered by international organisations. But over the last several years, the profiles have changed a lot: they are becoming increasingly professional. Today, managers and young graduates are looking for volunteering opportunities. If the goal of international volunteering is to give, it is also to learn that we embark on an adventure.

The importance of the return

Associations/Sending Organisations provide resources for formal training (documentation, conferences, etc.) and informal training (through mutual help, learning by initiation and identification). The main characteristics of associative learning is selected and practice-related learning.

The experience of volunteering internationally is a formative experience. The sources of learning are numerous: the mission, the environment (context), the work, etc. The experience of volunteering allows to learn by oneself but also through and with others (peers, colleagues, the guidance actors, training actors (reinforcement techniques).

If departure is marked by difficulties related to the general adaptation and adaptation to work, the return does not lack challenges. Expatriates are often less prepared for the difficulties they encounter when they return, which can cause great distress and have significant repercussions on family, social and professional functioning. After a few days of euphoria, volunteers may feel disoriented, frustrated and misunderstood. This is

called "reverse culture shock". It is important not to neglect the return and help the volunteer overcome difficulties and to re-acclimatise better to their environment.

In the long run, the success of an international mobility is appreciated by the quality of the return.

The Easy Project

In order to contribute to recognising the soft skills developed through international youth volunteering experiences, FOCSIV, FEC and LA GUILDE, which have long term experience in the field, and Elidea, I-O psychologists, cooperate in the present project. As part of the project, the partners have developed a model for assessing and grading the soft skills that are developed through international youth volunteering. The model has been used to develop specific training tools for youth workers: the first one to enhance soft skills in preparation for international volunteering, and **the second to support and guide young volunteers after their experience**. Moreover, an online platform has been created for youth to self-assess their soft-skills, where a test helps participants verify the level soft skills they have developed before and at the end of the experience.

Thanks to the self-assessment test, young people will be able to attest their soft skills in a more objective and effective way, by using a shared European code for international youth volunteering.

Youth workers will benefit from the project tools and outputs too, professionalising their role and improving their capacity to guide young people during the international experiences (particularly, through the pre-departure training, the monitoring, the final evaluation and vocational guidance). Similarly, the International Volunteering sector will acquire more competences to offer highly formative experiences to young people, useful for their future professional life.

Explanation of Easy model

The **EaSY** project has developed the EaSY model, which is composed of the most significant soft skills developed by international volunteers during their experience abroad.

The main European studies about international volunteers' soft skills have been researched in order to better understand the different European models for measuring soft skills and how they approach to the volunteer experiences.

From this research, the main 7 Soft Skills developed by volunteers during their experience abroad were identified. They can be found below:

The “EaSY Model” in International Youth Volunteering



The following table lists the micro-skills that describe each Soft Skill:

These 7 Soft Skills are transversal competencies that volunteers can improve during their experiences. It is assumed that being aware of their soft skills gives volunteers more opportunities for identifying their professional goals and improves their chances to achieve them.

Soft Skills	Micro Skills
Clear Communication	-Synthesis -Written Communication -Clear Communication
Read the Context and Adaptation	-Reading the Context -Adaptability -Communication Adaptation
Followership - Support to the boss	-Support the leader -Critical thinking -Autonomy
Manage Frustration	-Mental Flexibility -Frustration Tolerance -Emotional Control
Create and Maintain Good Relationships	-Empathy -Listening -Create Relationships
Coordinate People	-Mediation -Sense of initiative -Small group coordination
Organise and Manage Resources	-Information processing -Organising Available Data -Analysing Skills

2. Online test of self-assessment tool

What it is

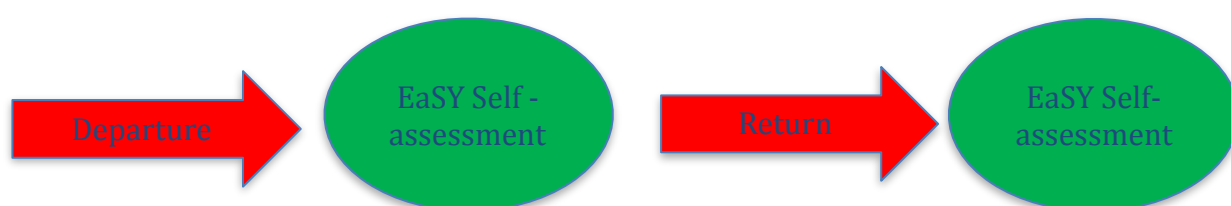
The online self-assessment tool is designed for the volunteers to measure their soft skills through a questionnaire. It is easy to use, and can be done by the volunteers themselves.

The 7 soft skills are measured through 73 multiple choice questions.

The **EaSY** test is based on the **EaSY** Model, which describes the following 7 soft-skills: clear communication, create and maintain good relationship, read context and adaptation, manage frustration, followership - support the boss, coordinate people, organise and manage resources.

When?

The assessment can be done before the departure of the volunteers and/or upon their return.



Aim of the tool

This test makes it possible to measure the strengths and improvement areas in terms of the soft-skills considered.

Explanation of the tool

How to use it

The volunteers may complete the online test when desired by navigating to:

www.easy-softskills.eu/en

The test will take approximately 60 to 80 minutes to complete.

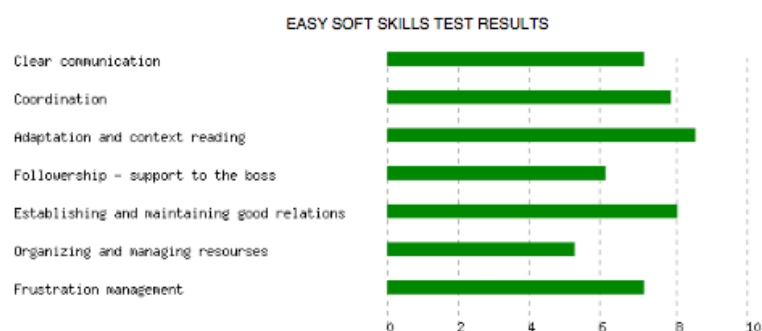
After the completion, they receive 2 different results:

1. The EaSY Report (complete of the description of 7 soft skills)

DESCRIPTION OF THE LEVELS

Competence	Livello	Descrizione di livello
Clear communication	C1	He / she presents good communication skills and is often able to argue in a clear, concise and precise manner both in written and oral form. He/she is able to offer exhaustive information, effectively adapting his / her language to the various interlocutors and contexts. His/her communication skills are recognized by others.
Coordination	C1	He / she shows a good ability to coordinate the organizational and human resources available to achieve the objectives. He / she is skilled in dictating times and methods for exchanging information among participants, becoming a point of reference in the management of organizational processes. He / she usually takes initiatives, proving himself / herself autonomous in the management of the group processes.
Adaptation and context reading	C2	He/she shows ability to adapt to several contexts and people, even significantly different. He/she is interested in knowing new communicative and relational approaches which are different from his/her cultural background, recognizing resources, limits, values and believes inherent with the framework he/she is coming in contact with. He/she is highly skilled in adapting his/her way of communicating to the ones of the interlocutor.
Followership - support to the boss	C1	He/she usually brings an added value to the work done, reaching the goals assigned. He/she has a good sense of responsibility and is committed to find adequate solutions when some difficulty occurs. He/she feels involved in every work interaction and his/her contribution is always felt as constructive.
Establishing and maintaining good relations	C2	He/she shows excellent comprehension of social interaction's rules and he/she is able to consciously use this skill to enter in relation with varied interlocutors and peoples. He/she is naturally inclined to build good relationships with others, adapting his way of behaving to the one of the partner and favoring mutual emotional support and reciprocal exchange. He/she is very good at handling emotions and at expressing his/her own feelings adequately.
Organizing and managing resources	B2	He/she displays moderate capacity of elaboration, organization and management of work, being able to fruitfully use the available resources. He/she is normally able to logical thinking, to successfully deepen and understand in details the situations faced. He/she can show some difficulties in particularly complex or stressful situations.
Frustration management	C1	He/she displays a good inclination in handling emotions even when facing stressful situations or particularly difficult moments. He/she appears strongly focused and effectively aware of his/her potentiality. In front of an unexpected situation, he/she is able to manage the available resources keeping a proactive attitude.

2. The EaSY Passport (with the level for each soft skill).



PASSPORT OF COMPETENCES

Competence	Level	Competence	Level
Clear communication	C1	Coordination	C1
Adaptation and context reading	C2	Followership - support to the boss	C1
Establishing and maintaining good relations	C2	Organizing and managing resources	B2
Frustration management	C1		

C2, C1, B = Strengths areas - B1, A = Improvement areas

How to organise the return self-assessment test

The youth worker will be in charge of informing, supporting, and following this process.

An email should be sent to the volunteer one month before their return to follow this process.

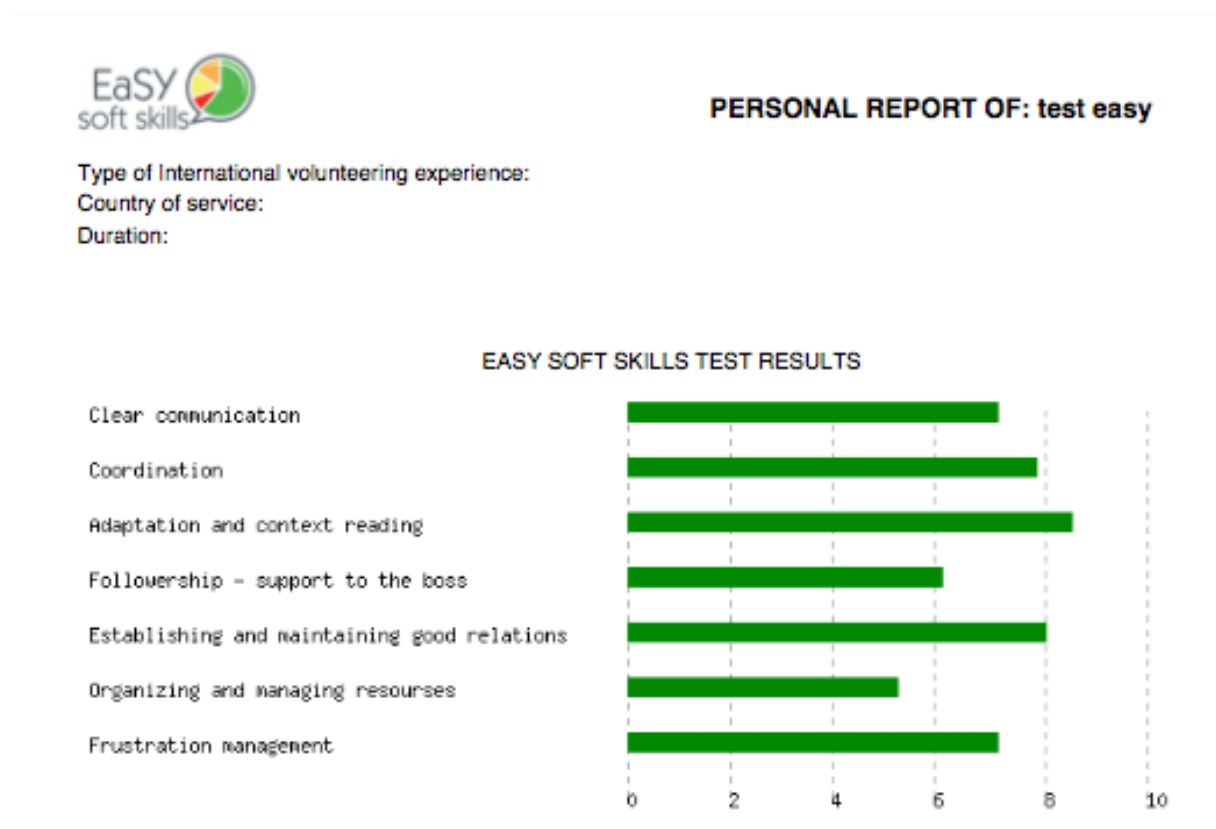
Instructions for the analysis of test results

Here you will find instructions about how to read the results of the online test, which are shown by the **EaSY Report** and the **EaSY Passport**.

The EaSY Report

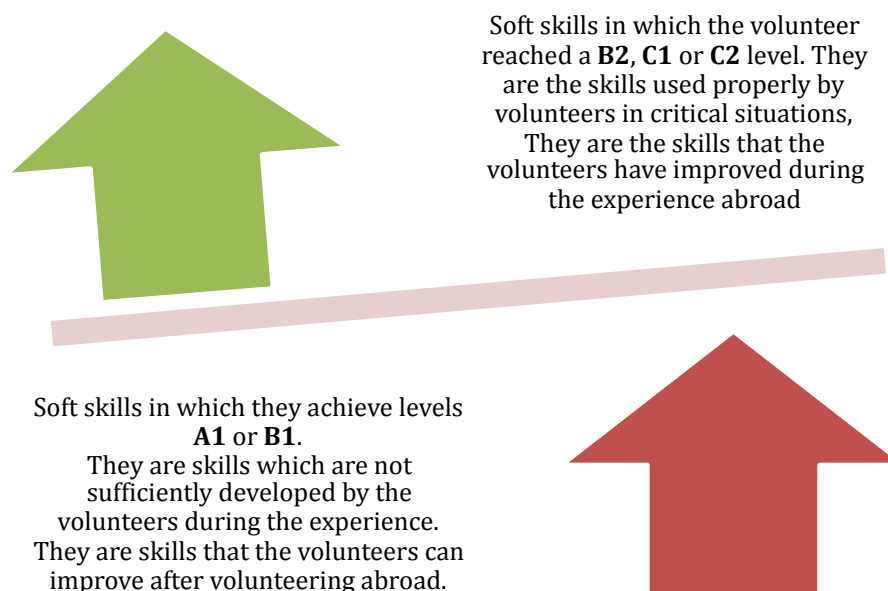
After completing the **EaSY test**, each volunteer receives a detailed report of their results. The report is composed of 3 pages.

As can be seen on the figure below, the first page of the report contains a graphic displaying the level reached for each soft-skill and its description.



The volunteers can reach **5 different levels of proficiency**. From the lowest level (A) to the highest level (C2).

The different levels are then grouped into two different areas, which describe possible strengths and improvement areas:



The EaSY Passport

In order to recognise the strengths of volunteers, we have also created the **EaSY Passport**, which describes the level reached for each soft skill (A, B1, B2, C1, C2). This makes it easier to identify the soft skills that are most developed.

Below is an example of the EaSY Passport:

PASSPORT OF COMPETENCES			
Competence	Level	Competence	Level
Clear communication	C1	Coordination	C1
Adaptation and context reading	C2	Followership - support to the boss	C1
Establishing and maintaining good relations	C2	Organizing and managing resources	B2
Frustration management	C1		

C2, C1, B = Strengths areas - B1, A = Improvement areas

The Report and the Passport make it easy to provide feedback to volunteers about their strengths and areas for improvement. The volunteers can better understand their best soft skills, which characterise their way to work and their talent. The volunteer will also have information about the soft-skills that need to be further improved.

Note that the volunteers have the possibility not to print all the competences checked in its report, they can select for example only competences with High levels (B2-C1-C2) to apply for a specific vacancy.

The analysis of EaSY Report

Below, you will find an **interpretative guide to the EaSY report**. This guide gives youth workers some important criteria to consider. These criteria help to interpret the report.

Criterion I - EaSY soft-skills can be grouped in 3 specific areas:

α) RELATIONAL SKILLS



Relationship Skills

1. "Clear communication"
2. "Create and maintain good relationships"

They are strongly correlated with the concept of **Interpersonal Intelligence** developed by Howard Gardner into his "Theory of multiple intelligences". This kind of intelligence is characterized by a way to understand through the interaction with others.

Volunteers who receive high-scores to one or to all of those soft skills are supposed to be:

- Relational oriented
- Interested in understanding the others' point of view
- Focused on a two-way communication

A profile which has high-levels of those soft-skills could be addressed to relational jobs or contexts where it is very important to create strong relationships with people. All jobs which require activities for members who are in contact with the public are suitable for this kind of profile.

α

β) EMOTIONAL SKILLS



Emotional Skills

1. "Manage frustration"
2. "Read context and adaptation"

Those skills are related to the **Intrapersonal Intelligence** of the "Theory of multiple intelligences". It is characterized by a strong contact with one's emotions and feelings, used to understand problems and situations. People who use mainly this kind of intelligence are able to adapt their behaviour to new contexts and situations.

Volunteers who receive high-scores to one or all of those soft skills are supposed to be:

- Emotion oriented
- Interested in reflecting on one's and others' feelings and emotions
- Focused on comprehension of others' communication

These profiles are particularly suitable for contexts which are faced with new challenges or organizations that require high levels of adaptation to complex situations. All creative jobs, for example start-up, can require people who are able to manage frustration due to reach objectives in a long-term perspective.

β

Y) ADMINISTRATIVE AND MANAGERIAL SKILLS



Administrative and managerial skills

1. "Followership-support the leader"
2. "Coordinate people"
3. "Organise and manage resources"

People who have high-levels of those soft-skills generally are:

- Goal oriented
- Interested in developing relationships focused on results
- Focused on shared communication

This kind of profile could be addressed to coordination and management roles. Companies or institutions who require people with good level of autonomy and organization need this kind of profile. So all jobs which require planning and coordination activities with other people or administrative tasks are suitable for this profile.

Y

Criterion II - Each volunteer can receive the highest levels (B2, C1, C2) of soft skills in the same or in different areas

Below you will find the three cases and possible combinations:

CASE 1 - If the combination is between soft-skills of the same area:

Refer to the previous guidelines about each area (see **Criteria I**)

CASE 2 - If the combination is between soft-skills of two different areas:

$\alpha + \beta$

Combination of two or three soft-skills with high levels in areas (α) and (β) characterises volunteers who want to create good relationships with colleagues and clients. These profiles are completed by a strong ability to adapt their behaviour to the requests of others (clients, colleagues, etc).

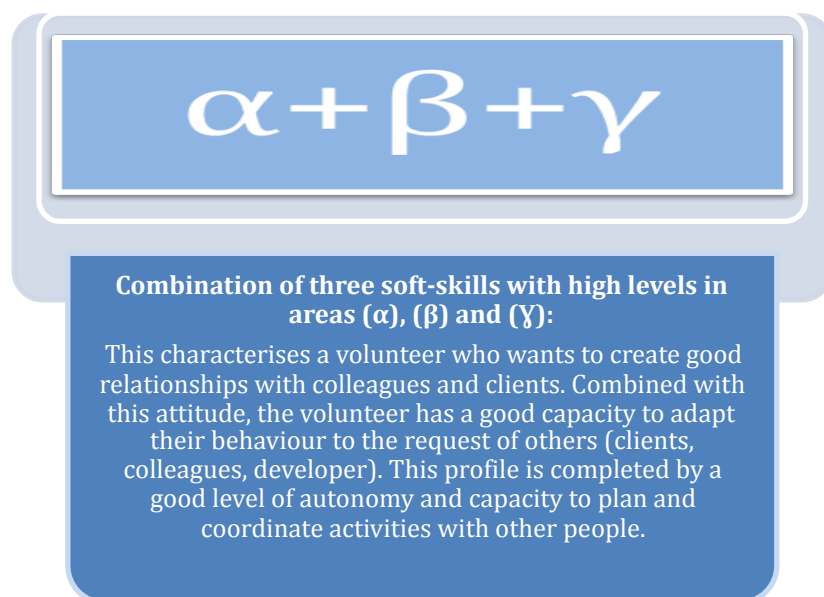
$\beta + \gamma$

Combination of two or three soft-skills with high-levels in areas (β) and (γ) characterises volunteers with a strong ability to adapt their behaviour to the request of others (clients, colleagues, etc). They also have a good level of autonomy and capacity to plan and coordinate activities with other people.

$\alpha + \gamma$

Combination of two or three soft-skills with high levels in areas (α) and (γ) characterises volunteers who want to create good relationships with colleagues and clients. At the same time these volunteers have a good level of autonomy and capacity to plan and coordinate activities with other people.

CASE 3 - If the Combination is between soft-skills of three different areas:



Criterion III - Each soft-skill has a specific meaning which better defines the profile

After phase two, you must consider the specific level and description of each soft-skill in which the volunteers have received high levels (B2, C1, C2).

An example can help you to understand how to follow this process:

PASSPORT OF COMPETENCES

Competence	Level	Competence	Level
Establishing and maintaining good relations	C2	Organizing and managing resources	B2
Frustration management	C1		

C2, C1, B = Strengths areas - B1, A = Improvement areas

This profile is therefore characterised by high levels of three soft skills which are present in all 3 areas (**Case 3**). After reading the description of **Case 3**, information should be added considering the specific soft-skills in which the volunteer has received high levels.

The description of below shows the descriptions of the soft-skills with high-levels:

Establishing and maintaining good relations	C2	He\she shows excellent comprehension of social interaction's rules and he\she is able to consciously use this skill to enter in relation with varied interlocutors and peoples. He\ she is naturally inclined to build good relationships with others, adapting his way of behaving to the one of the partner and favoring mutual emotional support and reciprocal exchange. He\she is very good at handling emotions and at expressing his\her own feelings adequately.
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Frustration management	C1	He/she displays a good inclination in handling emotions even when facing stressful situations or particularly difficult moments. He/she appears strongly focused and effectively aware of his/her potentiality. In front of an unexpected situation, he/she is able to manage the available resources keeping a proactive attitude.
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Organizing and managing resources	B2	He/she displays moderate capacity of elaboration, organization and management of work, being able to fruitfully use the available resources. He/she is normally able to logical thinking, to successfully deepen and understand in details the situations faced. He/she can show some difficulties in particularly complex or stressful situations.
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These descriptions will clarify each profile and help you to support volunteers during the professional guidance.

Grade IV - Reading each profile in term of possible sectors, jobs or roles

The following table is designed to give suggestions and help volunteers to better know the relation between profiles and possible fields or jobs.

It has to be clear for volunteers that the indications of fields are NOT prescriptive in any way, but just examples.

The purpose of this section is providing volunteers with space to think about possible sectors, areas and examples of jobs in line with their soft-skills.

Below are some examples about the relation between soft-skills and fields/jobs:

	Create and maintain good relationships	Clear communication	Read context and adaptation	Manage frustration	Followership-support the leader	Coordinate people	Organize and manage resources	AREA/SECTORS/ACTIVITIES i.e. professional roles
1	✓			✓			✓	a) Cultural and event activities (event management) b) Sales Sector c) Community Services
2	✓			✓		✓		a) Counselling services (i.e. foster home, halfway house) b) Interdepartmental coordination c) Team leader
3	✓			✓	✓			a) Health and care professions b) Education sector c) Social working
4	✓		✓		✓			a) Capacity building activities b) Supporting training activities c) Supporting project activities

5	✓		✓			✓		a) Managing fundraising b) Project management c) Coach
6	✓		✓				✓	a) Liberal professions b) Planning of training activities c) Area management
7		✓		✓	✓			a) Public information department b) Hospitality and tourism sector (i.e.: customer care, customer assistance) c) Street fundraising
8		✓		✓		✓		a) Cultural and event activities (tour guide, tour escort) b) Supervision activities c) HR Area (staff management)
9		✓		✓			✓	a) Administrative tasks b) HR Area (recruitment and selection) c) Initial Reception
10		✓	✓		✓			a) Communication area (press office) b) Communication and Campaigning c) Public Relation
11		✓	✓			✓		a) Communication area (i.e. writing and editing activities) b) HR (Formation and Training activities) c) Social Media Management
12		✓	✓				✓	a) Communication and Marketing (i.e. Social Media Consultant/Manager) b) Research and development department c) Projecting and fundraising

Youth workers can use their specific experience in their country to translate the combination of soft-skills with high levels to possible sectors, areas of work, tasks or examples of jobs.

3. EaSY practical tips for implementation

What this section will cover

The identification and valorisation of soft-skills remains weak. Yet, working abroad offers the opportunity for volunteers to develop new skills and enrich their initial capital.

Even when volunteers may expect to experience difficult situations abroad, they may be less prepared for the difficulties they face upon their return. The stresses associated with returning can cause significant distress and have significant repercussions on family, social and professional functioning. Accompanying volunteers when they return will allow for a better social and professional integration.

It is possible to adapt the support to volunteers upon their return according to the organisations' possibilities and volunteers' needs





Group sessions are the most recommended for sharing and exchanging

When it is not possible to have group sessions you can offer a half-day face-to-face individual session or a session via Skype or by phone.

The objective of this follow-up is

1. To achieve social reinsertion after a volunteer experience
2. To achieve an assessment of the soft-skills developed
3. To achieve professional reinsertion after a volunteer experience

Step 1: Prepare the return of the volunteer

Aim of the activity:			
Prepare the volunteer for return, allow the volunteer to complete an experience, start to distance themselves, structure their experience. Allow the volunteers to project themselves. Identify the soft skills acquired during mission.			
Type of activity:  Orientation	Group size:  Individual	Time:  4 weeks before departure	Material needed:  email

Instructions for youth worker:

1. Contact the volunteer by email or organise a phone call, **a month before** the return.
2. Explain the reason of the email. Ex: In a month your mission finished and you come home, it is a new step. This experience has been very intense and it is time to make a preliminary assessment and think about your experience... It's time to prepare your departure”.
3. Help the volunteer to highlight their personal development.
4. Guide the volunteer to evaluate his /her soft skills: complete the **EaSY self-assessment test** (refer to chapter 2 for guidelines on how to use it).

Do not forget to remind them that they will have to bring back the report for the return session.

1. Inform the volunteer about the return session (when, how long, contents...)
2. Help the volunteer prepare to provide a testimony.

Suggested questions:

1. What else do you have to do? How can you organise your departure?
2. An assessment of personal and professional achievements clarifies the benefits of the international experience: what did you learn from this experience?
3. What knowledge did you develop? How did you evolve?
4. Anticipating the return: what do you need? How can you prepare your reinstallation? Who can help you?
5. Define personal and professional projects: What do you want to achieve now? How can you link your experience to your projects?

3.1 Social reinsertion

Why is important?

The stressors volunteers have to deal with are very important. It is important to be able to talk about them. To put words on difficult experiences is a necessary step to reintegration to their environment. Many volunteers have experienced stressful situations, such as critical incidents, burn-outs, deaths in their families, etc.



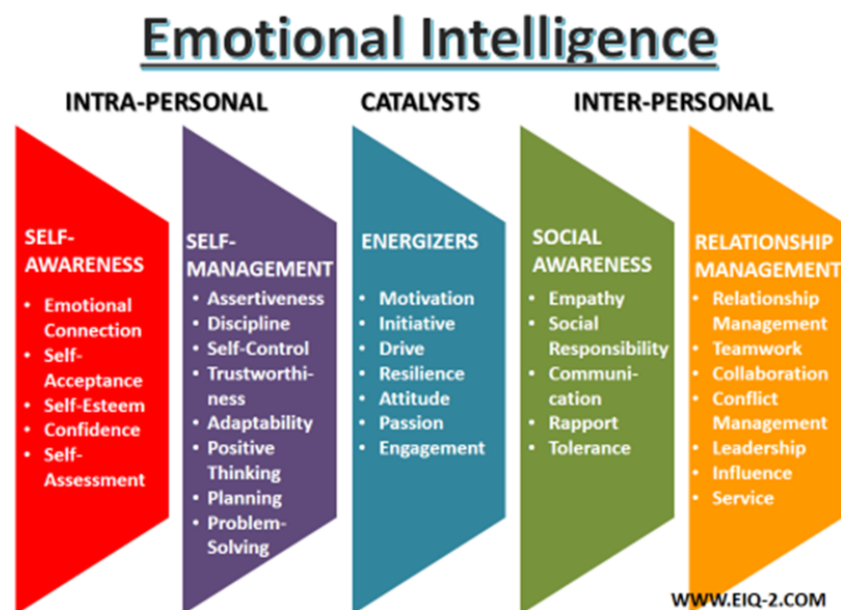
To enable the volunteer to make a successful return, it is important for him or her to be able to take a step back from his mission.

Often the volunteers, on their return, express a feeling of “misalignment” with those they left for several months or years: this is what we call the “reverse cultural shock”.

Outcomes?

- ✓ To allow volunteers to express and share certain aspects of their experiences and encourage free speech
- ✓ To allow volunteers to assess their volunteering experience
- ✓ To demonstrate that international mobility is a good way to develop **interpersonal competences**
- ✓ To allow participants to gain consciousness of how they have an impact.

We can characterise soft skills as those relating to **Emotional Intelligence**: the ability to recognise and manage your own and others’ emotions.



EaSY Tips

- First confronting their experiences in a group setting helps volunteers gain consciousness of their newly acquired skills
- Social reinsertion is linked with the followings skills:
 - ✓ Managing frustration
 - ✓ Adaptation - supporting the boss

Step 2: Group dynamic

Aim of the activity:

To create a good group dynamic for a successful session. Energisers can be used to help the group get to know each other better. They contribute to group dynamic, and are effective in reenergising volunteers when fatigue sets in.

Type of activity:



Energiser

Group size:



8-12 participants

Time:



30 minutes

Material needed:







Post-it, images, paper, pencils

Instructions for youth worker:

1. Organise the room to promote exchange and a warm environment
2. Present yourself
3. Present the objectives of the return session
4. Explain the logistics and schedule of the session
5. Ask the participant to present their neighbour, choosing, for example, one of the following energisers:
 - **Chinese portrait:** Is a metaphorical description of oneself by comparison with various things or elements, a tree, a flower, a film... based in the formula "If I were an animal, I'd be a...."
 - Define your mood of the day through a **drawing card** (Images from newspaper, drawing cards)
 - Use one **image to present the country** of experience.





Step 3: Look back on expectations of the project before departure and day-to-day experience

<p>Aim of the activity:</p> <p>Looking back to the expectations at the time of departure allows the volunteers to rethink their commitment and motivation to leave. Often due to unhappiness and frustration, the primary motivations are forgotten</p>			
<p>Type of activity:</p>  <p>Group</p>	<p>Group size:</p>  <p>8-12 participants</p>	<p>Time:</p>  <p>45 minutes</p>	<p>Material needed:</p>  <p>Post-it, pencils, flipchart</p>
<p>Benefits for groups: Making comparisons with other volunteers Be supported by the group Learning from others</p>		<p>Benefits for the individual: Focusing on individual needs Answer to personal difficulties Listen and understand</p>	

Instructions for youth workers:

1. The facilitator invites participants to share the expectations regarding their mission they had before the departure on an international volunteering experience.
2. The facilitator hands out post-its, in two different colours. One colour is for expressing personal expectations, and the other expectations for professional expectations.
3. Participants are given 5 minutes to work individually and write down their expectations, using the coloured post-its: one item per post-it.
4. At the end of the five minutes, the facilitator collects the post-its, reads them and places them on the wall in two groups (personal and professional), keeping common themes and similar ideas together. **Offer a special space for expectations related to soft skills.**
5. Share common expectations and reinforce the engagement and motivation.

Step 4: Emotional debriefing

<p>Aim of the activity:</p> <p>Offers to the volunteer a personal space on his life outside the purely professional context. Allows the volunteer to put words on difficulties and learn from them. Realise that difficult situations lead us to develop soft skills to adapt. By expressing, as a group, these experiences, the volunteer realises that they have emotions that are felt by others and this can be helpful.</p>			
<p>Type of activity:</p>  <p>Group / individual</p>	<p>Group size:</p>  <p>8-12 participants</p>	<p>Time:</p>  <p>1h 30 minutes</p>	<p>Material needed:</p>  <p>Post-it, pencils, flipchart</p>
<p>Individual: proceed in the same way by encouraging expression, and focus on soft skills developed.</p>			
<p>Benefits for groups: Making comparisons with other volunteers Be supported by the group Learning from others</p>		<p>Benefits for the individual: Focusing on individual needs Answer to personal difficulties Listen and understand</p>	

Instructions for youth workers

Depending on how much time you have for this activity you can use one of the following suggestions:

1. **Shorter debriefing:** (~10 minutes per volunteer):

- Ask the volunteer to choose one image or an object or a word that can describe their experience: You can bring back cards with pictures, or cut pictures from magazines for them to choose from.
- Ask the volunteer to choose two cards, each card should depict an emotion that they experienced during their mission.
- They can also draw an object and share it with the group or youth worker. At the end of this section, the volunteers can create a patchwork of the whole experience shared with other volunteers.

2. **Longer debriefing:** (~ 15 minutes per volunteer):

- Ask volunteers to work individually first.
- They must write in a paper **A Joy / A difficulty / A surprise / A skill developed** during their mission (You can list the **EaSY micro skills** to help them).

Don't forget

Prepare the volunteers to tell their story
Encourage interactions among volunteers

Ask question to go deeper:

“What resources did you have?”

“What has been effective?”

“What did you put in place to change the situation?”

“What will be different next time?”

“What did you learn?”

Make the link with the EaSY soft-skills

Step 5: Presentation of the projects' impact by NGO's

Aim of the activity:

Give volunteers the opportunity to better understand the impact of their projects at the end of the experience.

Knowing the impact of the project and the activities of volunteers helps them to valorise the experience abroad and the efficacy of their volunteering. Furthermore, it makes volunteers feel more engaged and improves a sense of self-efficacy.

Type of activity:



Group

Group size:



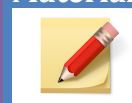
8-12 participants

Time:



2 hours (it also depends on number of projects)

Material needed:



Slides, Flipchart

Instruction for youth workers

1. Share with volunteers the sense and the general impact of the projects for the community/country
2. Inform volunteers about the goals achieved and new objectives for each project
3. Encourage volunteers to express which activities they carried out during each experience abroad
4. Give specific data about the volunteers, targets achieved, the beneficiaries and stakeholders involved
5. Show the relation between activities performed and the results achieved
6. Show connection between different projects

Step 6: Deal with the « reverse culture shock » in their countries of origin after a volunteer experience

Aim of the activity:

Help the volunteer to readjust to their own culture and deal with the emotional stress felt when he or she returns.

Return syndrome, also referred to as a "reverse cultural shock", is a common psychological response for many people who come back home after living and working for some time in another culture. The return also represents the mourning of the volunteer experience.

Type of activity:



Group/ individual

Group size:



8-12 participants

Time:



1 hour

Material needed:



Post-it, pencils, papers, flipchart

Benefits of groups:

Making comparisons with other volunteers
Learning from others

Benefits of individual sessions:

Focus in their specific fears and difficulties
Debrief about their Reverse Cultural Shock

Instruction for youth workers

1. Explain to volunteers what reverse cultural shock is and its consequences: differences phases, emotions, and reactions.
2. Encourage volunteers to express feeling about their return: thought drawing, roleplaying of specific situations, links with friends or family...
3. Ask a former volunteer to provide a testimony about their return
4. Give advice to reduce the negative impact of return:
 - a. Maintain a healthy diet and exercise; be regular with your schedule.
 - b. Join one or more networks (groups, associations, etc.) that allow you to socialise and open up new perspectives (professional, intercultural, other)
 - c. Look forward to using the new skills and knowledge gained while abroad
 - d. Accept that you have changed, accept the feelings of others
 - e. Write about your experience, and share it with others
 - f. Keep in touch with the friends and contacts you met while you were away
 - g. Find out what happened in your country during your absence

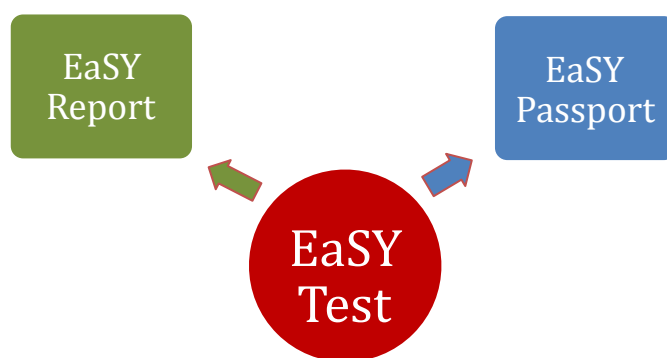
3.2 Professional guidance

What this section will cover

This section is intended to help youth workers to support volunteers in career guidance.

It provides some advice on how to conduct vocational guidance through the use of the **EaSY Report** and the **EaSY Passport**.

The **EaSY self-assessment test** generates two outputs: these two outputs give results about the strengths of volunteers and a general profile, which also includes “improvement areas”.



Why it's important

The main purpose of this process is making volunteers aware about their soft-skills, their aptitudes, and the coherence between those skills and their professional goals.

Being aware about this helps volunteers to better understand how to reach their professional goals or reformulate them according to their real soft-skills. This process allows volunteers to increase their awareness of their abilities and skills, and of their areas for improvement.

This self-awareness gives people who are looking for a job, the possibility to better understand own soft skills and to choose their career paths according to these aptitudes.







Learning outcomes

- Be able to read the **EaSY Report** and the **EaSY Passport**.
- Understand how to integrate those tools to the return training of volunteers and how to prepare volunteers for a job interview.

Step 7: Recognising professional goals and fields of interest

Below are two different tools. These tools are separate, but they could be reduced to a unique tool that integrates both.

Aim of the activity:			
<p>Discussing the results of the EaSY Self-Assessment Test with the volunteers</p> <p>Helping volunteers to read the profile</p> <p>Orientating volunteers to identify and develop professional goals</p> <p>Understanding which sectors are more suitable according to the competencies acquired.</p>			
Type of activity:	Group size:	Time:	Material needed:
 <p>Group/ individual</p>	 <p>8-12 participants</p>	 <p>2 hours and ½ 1 Hours and 1/2</p>	 <p>Paper, pencils, flipchart</p>
Benefits of groups: <p>Making comparisons with other volunteers</p> <p>Exchanging ideas about professional goals</p> <p>Learning from others</p> <p>Knowing more professional fields</p>		Benefits of individual sessions: <p>Focusing on individual objectives</p> <p>Workers can better understand needs of the volunteer</p> <p>Customised feedback</p> <p>More engagement for the volunteer</p>	

Instruction for youth worker:

1. Volunteers have already received the EaSY Report and Easy Passport
2. Introduce the purpose of the EaSY Self-Assessment Test
3. Explain how to read the profile according to the criteria explained above
4. Ask the volunteers to answer, in writing, the following questions using the results of the EaSY Self-assessment test
5. Ask 1 or 2 volunteers for a role play, where the worker interviews the volunteer with those questions and compares the interpretation of result with the answers (this activity can be made by small groups of 2 + 1 observer)
6. Give feedback on:
 - Clear communication of explanation
 - Coherence between soft-skills and the choice of their job or field of work
 - Coherence between verbal and non-verbal communication
 - Clear motivation of volunteers

Questions for follow-up during session

What field are you interested in?

What interests you about this field/job?

What are your professional goals in this field?




Are your experiences and cultural background coherent with this field/Job?

Are your soft-skills in line with this field/job?

Tips for individual session

It is the same structure of the group session, except for the discussion in groups. Furthermore, the individual session puts more emphasis on coherence between the **EaSY profile** and the choice of a job or field to work. The youth worker supports the volunteer to be aware about his or her profile and possible fields or jobs to reach.

Step 8: Preparation of a job interview: recognising strengths and enhancing improvement areas

<p>Aim of the activity:</p> <p>To discuss the results of the test with the volunteers in term of strengths and improvement areas</p> <p>Having a more objective description of the skills</p> <p>Enable volunteers to prepare a job interview</p> <p>Help volunteers to understand their professional objectives</p> <p>Support them to face to the coherence (or not) between soft-skills and professional goals</p>			
<p>Type of activity:</p>  <p>Group/ individual</p>	<p>Group size:</p>  <p>8-12 participants</p>	<p>Time:</p>  <p>Group: 2 hours and ½ Individual: 1 Hour and ½</p>	<p>Material needed:</p>  <p>Paper, pencils, Flipchart</p>
<p>Benefits of groups:</p> <p>Sharing experience between volunteers</p> <p>Making comparisons</p> <p>Exchanging ideas about professional goals</p> <p>Learning from others</p>		<p>Benefits of individual sessions:</p> <p>Focusing on individual goals</p> <p>Youth workers can better understand the needs of the volunteer</p> <p>Customised feedback</p> <p>More engagement for the volunteer</p>	

Instructions for youth workers:

- Volunteers have already received the **EaSY Report and EaSY Passport**
- Workers introduce the purpose of the **EaSY Self-Assessment Test**
- They answer in writing the above questions using the results of the **EaSY self-assessment test**
- Then each question area is discussed (1 Identifying strengths, 2 Identifying improvement areas, 3 Supporting people...) using a role play with one volunteer.
The role-play could be for example a “mock-interview” which replied the questions asked in writing
- After each role-play, the youth worker gives feedback to the volunteer following the below criteria:
 - clear communication about his/her explanation
 - completeness of the answers
 - coherence between strengths and examples given
 - coherence between different answers

5. setting realistic goals
6. Finally, the youth workers answer, in the group setting, any doubts or questions from volunteers.
7. Youth workers invite volunteers to think about the coherence between **soft-skills** and professional goals
8. At the end of the session, the youth workers give feedback to participants about the 7 **EaSY Soft skills** (have they used the 7 soft skills during the session? In which case?)

You can ask the following questions, which are strongly related to the EaSY Model and to the typical HR interview questions:

Identifying strengths of volunteers

- What are your strengths in terms of soft-skills?
- Can you give some examples about situations in which you used those soft-skills?
- Why should we hire you?

Identifying improvement areas

- What are your weaknesses or improvement areas in term of soft-skills?
- How can you improve these soft-skills?
- How are you still improving your soft-skills?

Supporting people to understand their professional goals

- Where do you see yourself in 5 years?
- What are your professional goals?
- In which professional fields you can use your profile?
- Why did you choose this field?

As you can see, the points 1 and 2 can be deducted by the EaSY Report and EaSY Passport, using also the previous suggestions about **how to read a profile and how to use the EaSY Model for Career Guidance**.

The purpose of those questions is to deepen the results of the self-assessment test.

Tips for individual session

It is the same structure of the group session, except for the discussion in groups. Furthermore, the individual session puts a greater emphasis on coherence between soft skills (strengths and improvement areas) and professional goals. The youth worker can reorient volunteer to more realistic goals.

The role of youth workers in this delicate moment is to help volunteers understand the coherence (or not) between their attitudes and soft-skills with their professional goals. Being aware about this coherence helps volunteers to build a strong professional career according to their experiences and profiles, identifying fields where they can find job. Otherwise it is also very useful to be aware of any differences between them in order to improve the skills required or to reformulate the goals according to their aptitudes.

Step 9: Insert the EaSY Passport into the CV

Aim of the activity:			
Describe the soft-skills developed during the experience abroad and certified by EaSY Give added-value to the experience abroad Use the Easy Passport on job research			
Type of activity:  Group/ individual	Group size:  8-12 participants	Time:  20 minutes	Material needed:  Paper, flipchart, pencils
Benefits of groups: Sharing experience between volunteers Making comparisons Exchanging ideas about professional goals Learning from others		Benefits of individual sessions: Focusing on individual goals Youth workers can better understand needs of the volunteer More engagement for the volunteer	

Instructions for youth workers

1. Create a specific section to insert the Soft Skills. Below is an example using the "European Curriculum Vitae format"
2. For each soft skill write the description from the EaSY Report
3. Indicate for each soft skill the level achieved (i.e. good ability to manage frustration, strong ability to organise and manage resources)

4. Insert the EaSY Passport, which shows the level of each soft-skill evaluated by the EaSY self-assessment test
 - They can choose a summary table of the **EaSY Passport** that shows only the soft-skills with high-levels (B2, C1, C2). This can help them prepare in case the interviewer has questions about the soft skills in which they show low scores.
5. Attach the **EaSY Report** to their CV

PERSONAL SKILLS AND COMPETENCES <i>Acquired in the course of life and career but not necessarily covered by formal certificates and diplomas.</i>	
MOTHER TONGUE	[Specify mother tongue]
OTHER LANGUAGES	
• Reading skills	[Specify language]
• Writing skills	[Indicate level: excellent, good, basic.]
• Verbal skills	[Indicate level: excellent, good, basic.]
SOCIAL SKILLS AND COMPETENCES	[Describe these competences and indicate where they were acquired.]
<i>Living and working with other people, in multicultural environments, in positions where communication is important and situations where teamwork is essential (for example culture and sports), etc.</i>	
ORGANISATIONAL SKILLS AND COMPETENCES	[Describe these competences and indicate where they were acquired.]
<i>Coordination and administration of people, projects and budgets; at work, in voluntary work (for example culture and sports) and at home, etc.</i>	
TECHNICAL SKILLS AND COMPETENCES	[Describe these competences and indicate where they were acquired.]
<i>With computers, specific kinds of equipment, machinery, etc.</i>	

4. Conclusions

This guidebook aims to demonstrate that international mobility is a good way to develop soft-skills.

The EaSY model aims to help understand the soft-skills that are developed through volunteering internationally.

Through the online EaSY self-assessment test, volunteers can measure their soft-skills before departure to identify gaps and needs. Upon their return, the tool offers an opportunity to know which skills have been developed and the impact that the experience has had on their personal and professional development.

Incorporating the EaSY model in the return sessions gives a unique opportunity to help young people to verbalise their experience, and to identify and value the competences developed thanks to projects carried out abroad. The practical tips for youth workers allow an easy integration of the model within return sessions and explain how these competences can be useful socially and professionally.

The objective of the guidebook is to support youth workers to use effective tools that help volunteers valorise the skills developed abroad, and, in turn, to help volunteers understand the breadth of skills they possess and facilitate their insertion to the job market.

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6. Annexes

Easy volunteer return training – 2 Days

Training Schedule

The times indicated below are for reference only. They can be adjusted according to the size and composition of a given group.

DAY 1
09.30h-09.45h: Welcoming participants 09.45H-10.30h: Energiser (to create group dynamic) 10.30h-11.00h: Look back on expectations 11.00H-13.00h: Emotional debriefing 13.00h-14.00h: Lunch 14.00h-15.30h: Dealing with reverse cultural shock 15.30h-15.45h: Break 15.45h-17.30h: Presentations of the projects' impact by the NGO
DAY 2
09.30h-10.00h: Welcoming participants & energisers 10.00H-12.30h: Career guidance 12.30h- 13.30h: Lunch 13.300h-16.00h: Preparation for a job interview 16.00h-16.15h: Break 16.15h-17.30h: Insert the Easy Passport to the CV

Easy volunteer return training – 1 Day

Training Schedule

The times indicated below are for reference only. They can be adjusted according to the size and composition of a given group.

MORNING
09.30h-09.45h: Welcoming participants
09.45H-10.30h: Energiser (to create group dynamic)
10.30h-12.00h: Emotional debriefing
12.00H-13.00h: Dealing with reverse cultural shock
13.00h- 14.00 h: lunch
AFTERNOON
14.00H-15.30h: Career guidance
15.30h- 15.45h: Break
15.45h-17.00h: preparation for a job interview
17.00h-17.30h: Inserting the Easy Passport to the CV

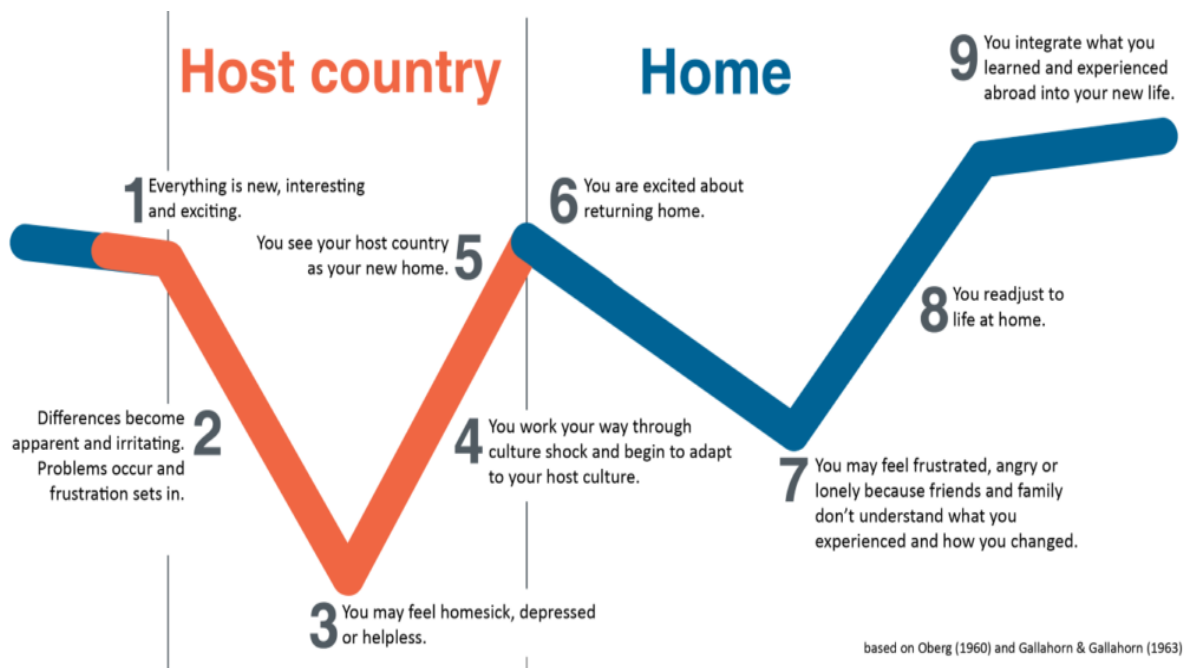
The reverse cultural shock

The reverse cultural shock is a term that is typically used to describe the unanticipated adjustments difficulties that many expatriates experience when returning to their normal lives.

The difficulties they may face upon re-entering their own culture.

Typically, the more successful they were in immersing themselves in the country and culture where they have just been, the more difficult a time they will have re-adjusting to their own culture, and getting back into the routine on their old life.

The reverse cultural shock W-curve



Symptoms:

- Vague disoriented and isolated feelings
- Confusion
- Need for excessive sleep
- Feeling resistant to family and friends
- Boredom
- Uncertainty
- Feeling homesick for work and friends made abroad
- Wanting to be alone
- Depression

How to cope with reverse culture shock?

Adjusting to the rhythms of life at home requires much of the same coping skills that volunteers had relied on their work in their host country.

- Get together with others
- Maintain a sense of humour and patience, similar to that overseas
- Keep in touch with contacts and friends with you met while you were away
- Seek out international news so you do not feel so abruptly cut off from your experience
- Look for ways to use the news skills and knowledge you gained while abroad
- Write about your experience and share with others
- Maintain a healthy way of life (sleeping, eating and exercise)
- Talk about your experience
- Get involved