



“STARTING FRESH & GROWING STRONG!”

15th - 21st of October - Partner building seminar
Marttinen youth centre, Virrat Finland



Context of Seminar

Youth Centre Marttinen, located in Virrat, Finland, is one of the 10 national youth centres in co-funded and supervised by the Ministry of education and culture. Young people living in our area face many socio-economical challenges i.e. due to the rurality of the region we work in - even to a point where there's some research shows that our young people are not “truly equal” from the possibilities compared to the young people in urban areas. This naturally worries us, and we of course feel that it is our job as a youth centre to take on these challenges!

We actually have worked already since 10 years hosting long-term EVS in our centre, and are convinced that EVS is a great way and a “low threshold approach” in supporting our surrounding communities and organisations in international education, as well as giving young people direct and authentic learning opportunities and experiences. As said, the youth centre has recently invested more resources towards taking a stronger role in coordinating international youth work in the region.

Our strategy is to offer concrete support directly to the municipalities and organisations around us, so that they can gradually start implementing their first projects in the international dimension, and offering more opportunities for their own young people - with our support throughout the process! This means taking small steps together with our regions youth workers, finding the right partners, and building long term models and impact on new cooperation. In other words, we feel it's an opportunity for **“Starting fresh & growing strong!”** - when it comes to EVS!



So far we have managed to raise interest in a handfull of municipalities and NGO's around us (in the region if North-Pirkanmaa), who would be willing to embark on these steps (as our local / regional partners) and possibly host and send EVS volunteers in the next year or so. Our role as a youth centre would be to support and coordinate these processes through proposals and initiatives, much like the one we are setting up now and inviting you to be a part of too.

Why this seminar?

We feel, that the next logical thing and "small steps" towards the righ direction (to support our region) would be to tackle the following needs identified by the Youth Centre team:

- *"We need to find good, quality partners on European level with whom we can set up clear agenda, stategy and guidlines in order to build a strong network for future cooperation in EVS..."*
- *"Our region and its youth work actors need to be introduced properly and with a "low-threshold" to international work, in order motivate them and to expect quality engagement in the future..."*
- *"We need to understand better / create common understanding in our network of the various opportunities, working methods and approaches the European Voluntary Service offers, and how they could fit to our own and other partners reality the best way possible..."*

So what is it?

The activity will bring together 5 organisations (handpicked from previous cooperations with youth centres) from accross Europe (Finland, Ireland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Estonia) that are looking for new ways and long term engagement in setting up EVS projects in different shapes (sending, hosting, coordinating, short-term, long term, strategic...) in the future years. The activity is be a 7-day seminar in October 2017 (15th -21st), focusing on building a network and common understanding, sharing approaches, methods, and agendas for future cooperation... In other words the Parnterhsip building seminar will work on the following objectives & topics:

- What are the realities, needs, agendas and experience of each partner organisations in relation to EVS?
- How to set up a common ground, approaches and possible concrete strategy and between partners for future cooperation in EVS?
- What are the quality standards and criteria the partnerhsip wants to ensure in future cooperation (i.e. in relation to working with young people with fewer opportunities)
- What are the tools, methods and ways of working that exist already in the partnership network, and how can we benefit from them in the future cooperation

Besides this, the European parnters of the project would be introduced to the local partners of Marttinen youth centre through a "study visit" -type of daily flow, meeting, greeting and discussing with the local youth workers, and getting familiar with the circumstances and reality we plan to set up our hosting EVS activities in the future. The activity would be targeted especially to EVS coordinators and youth workers, willing to embark on a new network of quality partners, and plan ahead for future projects.