

İSTANBUL BİLGİ UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

SOCIAL PROJECTS AND MANAGEMENT OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL
ORGANIZATIONS
MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAM

INTERNATIONAL YOUTH VOLUNTEERING: CASE OF EUROPEAN
SOLIDARITY CORPS AND EUROPEAN VOLUNTARY SERVICE IN
SOUTH EAST TURKEY

ONUR TAHMAZ
115707010

Prof.Dr. Nurhan Yentürk

İSTANBUL

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Tez Danışmanı :

(İmza)

..... Üniversitesi

Jüri Üyeleri

(İmza)

..... Üniversitesi

Juri Üyesi:

(İmza)

..... Üniversitesi

Tezin Onaylandığı Tarih :

Toplam Sayfa Sayısı:

Anahtar Kelimeler (Türkçe)

Anahtar Kelimeler (İngilizce)

1)

1)

2)

2)

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DGMM	: Directorate General of Migration Management
EACEA	: Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency
EC	: European Commission
ECU	: European Currency Unit
EEC	: European Economic Community
EFTA	: European Free Trade Association
EU	: European Union
ESC	: European Solidarity Corps
EYP	: European Youth Portal
EVS	: European Voluntary Service
GAP	: Güneydoğu Anadolu Projesi (South Eastern Anatolia Project)
GAP YA	: GAP Youth Association
GEGED	: Gaziantep Education and Youth Association
GIZ	: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
IPA	: Instrument for Pre-Accession
KA	: Key Action
LLP	: Life Long Learning Programme
NA	: National Agency
RAY	: Research-based Analysis and Monitoring of European Youth Programmes
SALTO	: Support, Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities for Youth
UNHCR	: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNV	: United Nations Volunteers
QL	: Quality Label
VSO	: Voluntary Service Overseas
YiA	: Youth in Action

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to understand the profile of the volunteers participated in European Voluntary Service or European Solidarity Corps programs in South-East Turkey as short- or long-term volunteers, their experiences before, during and after the volunteering process. The European Youth Programs and the policy papers which constitute the basis for these programs are explained. A general framework on the factors impacting international volunteering and European Youth Programs in Turkey and South-East Turkey with the information of the organizations constituting this study is elaborated.

During the study, 19 volunteers were interviewed by using semi-structured interview methodology. During the analysis, the process of volunteering was divided into three clusters as before, during and after volunteering in South-East Turkey.

While their profile and perception of volunteering align with the general international volunteering reality, their choices concerning education and employment differentiated. The most distinctive finding was that the hosting organizations' free-space policy enabling the volunteer to take initiatives had a positive impact on the volunteers' participation in the activities. Furthermore, the interaction between volunteers coming from different cultures created impact on the volunteering experiences more than their interaction with the local community regarding cultural awareness.

Keywords: European Solidarity Corps, European Voluntary Service, International Volunteering, South-East Turkey, Volunteering with Refugees

ÖZET

Bu çalışma temelde Avrupa Gönüllü Hizmeti ve Avrupa Dayanışma Programı çerçevesinde Güneydoğu Anadolu Bölgesi'nde kısa ve uzun dönem olarak gönüllü faaliyetlerine katılmış gönüllü bireylerin kim olduklarını, gönüllülük aşaması öncesinde, sürecinde ve sonrasındaki deneyimlerini anlamayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışma sürecinde, öncelikle Avrupa Gençlik Programları ve bu programların temel yapısını oluşturan politika belgelerinden bahsedilmiştir. Daha sonra, uluslararası gönüllülüğü etkileyen faktörlere değinilerek, Türkiye ve Güneydoğu Anadolu'da Avrupa Gençlik Programları ve bölgede çalışan kurumlara dair genel bir çerçeve sunulmuştur.

Çalışma sürecinde yarı-yapılandırılmış görüşme metodu kullanılarak, 19 gönüllüyle görüşülmüştür. Analiz sürecinde, gönüllülerin Güneydoğu Türkiye'deki gönüllülük deneyimleri; 3 ayrı bölümde, gönüllülük süreci öncesi, gönüllülük sürecinde ve gönüllülük süreci sonrası olarak analiz edilmiştir.

Sonuç olarak, Gönüllülerin profilleri ve gönüllüğe yönelik algıları uluslararası gönüllülük gerçekliğiyle eşleşmesine rağmen, eğitim ve istihdam alanına dair tercihlerinin farklılaştığı görülmüştür. Araştırma sürecinde bulunan en belirgin ve farklılaşan nokta ise, ev sahibi kuruluşların gönüllülerin inisiyatif almalarına olanak sağlayan “serbest alan” politikasının; gönüllülerin faaliyetlere katılımı üzerinde olumlu bir etkiye sahip olduğudur. Aynı zamanda, farklı kültürlerden gelen gönüllülerin birbirleriyle ilişkilerinin; kültürel farkındalık açısından yerel toplumla ilişkilerinden daha çok gönüllülük deneyimleri üzerinde etki yarattığı görülmüştür.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Avrupa Dayanışma Programı, Avrupa Gönüllü Hizmeti, Uluslararası Gönüllülük, Güneydoğu Anadolu, Mültecilerle Gönüllülük

INTRODUCTION

One of the leading international youth volunteering programs between Turkey and European Union countries has been the European Voluntary Service. European Voluntary Service program initiated in 1996 and involved more than 100.000 young people from Europe in its 20th year. The program was one of the European Commission's success stories concerning the youth field (EC,2014). In 2004 April, Turkey became entirely the part of EU Education and Training Programs after the memorandum signature with the EU and 18th month preparation period initiated in 2000 (Yıldırım & Adnan, 2007). Since then, EVS has been implemented in Turkey. This program currently changed its structure to ESC by incorporating job opportunities and in-country volunteering (EACEA,2019) since 2018.

European Solidarity Corps is focused on young people aged between 18-30. It is open to young people from EU-28, EFTA, candidate countries and the neighbouring countries from Western Balkans, Eastern Partnership Countries, South-Mediterranean Countries and the Russian Federation. In the framework of ESC, the volunteers receive support from at least two organizations, such as hosting and support¹ during their project. These organizations are accredited by the respective national agencies where the organizations resided or SALTO Resource Centres according to the geographical area after evaluation of the organizations' application in accordance with QL Measures (EACEA, 2019).

Between 2018 and 2020, 694 young people from Turkey involved in the volunteering projects funded within the framework of ESC in Europe and neighbouring countries while only 90 young people from other countries involved

¹ Support organization in ESC is considered as sending organisation within EVS. Through the text, I have used the terminology as sending organisation rather than support organization to prevent ambiguity.

in the activities took place in Turkey (EACEA,2020). There are 323 organisations involved in ESC and former EVS in Turkey by the date of 2020 February.

Although, in South-East Turkey, there have been only two organizations that are continually receiving volunteers: GAP YA (Şanlıurfa) and GEGED (Gaziantep) in past three years (EYP,2020). Concerning their hosting projects, they involve volunteers from all countries defined within the programme as programme and partner countries.

The purpose of the study is to understand the profile of the volunteers participated in EVS/ESC Program in South-East Turkey as short- or long-term volunteers and analyse their experiences for contributing to the studies done in the field of European Youth Programmes and international volunteering with a specific case as South-East Turkey. Furthermore, the study tries to answer the questions concerning the profile of the volunteers, their motivation and their volunteering processes and aftermath of their volunteering.

The study was designed in five different chapters. In the first chapter “*European Youth Programs*”, the evaluation of the European Youth Policies and European Youth Programs were. Furthermore, The framework of European Solidarity Corps and European Voluntary Service with the analysis of impact studies, reports and statistics provided covering European Union and neighbouring countries were developed.

In second chapter, “*International Volunteering*” , the international volunteering from the literature developed with the examples from different volunteering programs such as PeaceCorps, UNV, EUAid, VSO, etc. in international contexts as well as ESC/EVS in European Context were explained. Within this chapter, The similarities and differences between EVS/ESC with the international volunteering context as well as the factors impacting the volunteering experiences such as the profile of the volunteers, their motivation towards volunteering or duration of

voluntary service were discussed. To focus the research on the international volunteering context rather than volunteering in general, the literature used was curbed specifically within international youth volunteering context.

In the third chapter, Turkey's involvement in European Youth programmes and the evolution of the programs within Turkish context were deliberated. Furthermore, I tried to shed a light on the context in South-East Turkey and the organizations involved in EVS/ESC in South-East Turkey. During that the data was compiled from the information provided in yearly statistical annexes, interim and final reports of the programs through the years. Even though, I wanted to profundify the information concerning the projects in Turkey, though the project fiches were not accurate in Erasmus+ Project Results Platform² to frame a picture about the involvement of organizations in Turkey.

In the fourth chapter, the research process, interview structure, methodology and the choice of the method and provide information regarding research sampling were explained.

In the fifth chapter, the motivation of volunteers to involve in EVS/ESC, their experiences with sending and hosting organizations, the activities and their relation with the staff, local community, the other volunteers as well as the beneficiaries were argued against the framework developed under "*European Youth Programs*" and "*International Volunteering*" chapters.

The significance of the study is primarily analysing the profile of the incoming volunteers rather than outgoing volunteers and incorporating not only the European but European and North-African volunteers to its sampling. Secondly, the study directly tries to answer the reasons of the volunteers to choose South-East Turkey over the other regions in Turkey as well as other countries.

² Erasmus+ Project Results Platform : https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/projects_en

The shortcoming and limitations of the study is in essence the language of the volunteers. None of the volunteers' native language was English as like the researcher, that might have impacted on the volunteers' expressions of feelings and thoughts. Because of this particular reason, the study excluded the young people who couldn't communicate in English in other words, a proportion of young people with educational difficulties. The study could have been widened by involving the local community, sending organizations and staff of the hosting organizations but to narrow down the research, only the experiences of the volunteers and their reflections about the volunteering in South-East Turkey within the EVS/ESC Programmes were focused.

1. EUROPEAN YOUTH PROGRAMS

Youth volunteering in Europe dates back to the 1920s when the volunteering aimed to bind up the WWI wounds within the context of military conflicts. After 1945s, the civic service framework changed its form to voluntary service and, later on, evolved to European Voluntary Service. In 1996, EVS started as a pilot-program focusing on transnational volunteering in European Union member states (Geudens et al., 2013). Even though there have been initiatives by the European countries for their citizens which I explained briefly under “*International Volunteering*”, European Voluntary Service became the most well-known program due to its geographical comprehensiveness and inclusivity.

Since 1996, EVS has reached more than 100.000 people from different countries in Europe and neighbouring regions. EVS provided opportunities for young people to stay abroad and involve in volunteering activities. 6.000 organisations involved in the program, took different roles such as sending, coordinating and hosting to support and involve volunteers. After its 20th anniversary in 2016, EVS gave its place to European Solidarity Corps and widened its scope not only the mobilities for volunteering but promoting solidarity and volunteering in local projects (Brandenburg,2017). During this process, the shape of the program changed with the policies put in place by the EU. In this chapter, I explained which policy paper affected the development of volunteering activities and European Youth Programmes in a detailed way.

1.1.Development of European Youth Programs

European Youth Programs has longstanding history after the foundation of EEC. As it is published in 1988 in Official Journal of European Communities; "Youth for Europe" was developed for young people to be involved in cross-border activities in another member state to gain new skills and learn about the lives of the people in other countries at first hand. In 1988, the program was planned for two years with a budget of 15 million ECU (ECC,1988). This program continued with small

changes until 1999 after ten years as follows: Youth for Europe I (1989-1991), Youth for Europe II (1992-1994), Youth for Europe (1995-1999) (EC,2014). These youth programs are developed to promote understanding between the member states. Moreover, they are formed to provide young people with opportunities to be prepared for adult and working life. During those evolutions of the program, the structures changed.

In 1996, European Voluntary Service's pilot action was launched to experiment on the new approach as a form of transnational volunteering activity between the EU member states. During this pilot process, EC used a decentralised system to implement the program with the small structure for partner-finding, support, monitoring and evaluation of the projects. The pilot process implemented with the mechanisms set within the **Youth for Europe Programme** (EEC,1996). After two years, EVS was developed as a multi-annual framework after successfully completing the pilot action. Initially, Youth for Europe and European Voluntary Service was for the young people aged between 18-25. The program aimed to mainstream the mobility of young people while increasing their skills throughout transnational activities, contributing to the democracy, tolerance, and solidarity in European communities and creating a link between the third and European communities. The voluntary service activities did not only involve the member states. Third countries were involved in the program as hosting communities. However, the program was only open to the participation of the legal residents of the member states. The budget agreed by the EEC was 47,5 ECU for a two-year period (EEC,1998).

EVS was developed to support long-term and short-term volunteering activities for young people. Moreover, it had a feature for partnership activities among the involved organisations to the program to increase the quality of the support mechanisms and provide a space for development of the volunteering activities (EEC,1998). In between 1998 – 2000, EVS was implemented as a separate program from Youth for Europe. After the 2000s, with the creation of "**Youth**" **community**

action program in 2000, the EVS incorporated with the program. Youth programme aimed at young people's self-development by increasing their opportunities to gain competences for their future development and make them active citizens. Contrary to previous programmes, the Youth program was extended to EFTA Countries and Cyprus, Malta and Turkey. The program was divided into five categories such as *"Youth for Europe"*, *"European Voluntary Service"*, *"Youth Initiatives"*, *"Joint Actions"*, *"Support Measures"*. The program had the feature for the participants as full board and lodging, mentoring, health insurance and allowance (EC,2000). These features are still the features of the European Solidarity Corps as the successor of European Voluntary Service today.

Between 2007 – 2013, **YiA (Youth in Action)** program was implemented similar to the previous programme. EVS was continued to be sub-action under YiA during the all program period. The general objective of the YiA Programme were promoting the active citizenship of young people while developing solidarity, in particular social cohesion between the EU communities by boosting the understanding of young people concerning the different cultures and countries, contributing the quality systems within the youth field by developing the capacities of organizations and promoting cooperation within Europe. YiA changed its age scope from 15 to 28 differently than the previous youth programme, which was between 18-25. This age limit was set as 18-30 for European Voluntary Service programs (EU, 2006). After the completion of the program in 2014, the program changed its name to Erasmus+ Programme.

From 1988 to 2013, the youth programs budget increased budget consecutively to address the demand from the young people. As it stated in ***"Council Recommendation on mobility of young volunteers across Europe"*** (EC,2008c), the AVSO (Association of Voluntary Organisations) were able to address the 74% of the request of young people to involve in cross-border volunteering activities. Furthermore, in the mentioned report the 2007 Eurobarometer survey of youth was cited to indicate that only 16% of young people involved in volunteering activity

while 74% of young people would want to involve in volunteering if the opportunity present itself. Henceforth, it justifies the increase of the program budget and involving more young people in the volunteering opportunities.

Before explaining the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps, I would like to outline the evaluation of the previous programs consecutively from Youth and Youth in Action. Furthermore, it is worth to mention that there has not been a compiled information or a study of the comparative data of the programs through the years or their evolution process. Due to this reason, I had to extract information from each EUR-LEX entry by filtering the year and programme to have detailed overview of the European Youth Programmes as well as their evaluation results or impact studies.

According to “*The Youth for Europe Programme – Annual Report 1988/1989*” (EEC,1990); 20.000 young people involved only in 1989 in youth exchanges. It as well emphasized that Youth for Europe implemented between 1988-1989 got an overwhelming response from both young people and youth organizations in the member states. As the applications received was three times more than the financial resources available. Correspondingly, in the second phase of Europe II, the youth program increased its budget to address the response from youth organizations and increase its availability for the young people.

As it is stated in the Youth for Europe II phase report in 1992 (EEC,1993), the number increased from 20.000 to 30.000 young people living in member states benefited from the program. Furthermore, the program has increased its outreach due to increase in the budget and involvement of other countries to the program. Moreover, the majority of the participants aged 16 to 22 participated to the activities under “*Action I.1. Direct Grants to Young People*” and aged 20 to 25 participated to the activities under “*Action I.2. Voluntary Service*”. I consider that word to mention even European Voluntary Service were started officially after 1996, it can

be seen that the voluntary service activities date back to the Youth for Europe II phase.

According to the Youth for Europe III Interim Evaluation Report published in February 1998 (EEC,1998) the number of young people benefited from the programmed increased from 30.000 to 100.000. Even though, in Youth for Europe I and II Phases, the actions were centralised and covered the European countries, in Youth for Europe III Phase, the program extended its scope to neighbouring countries. On the other hand, cooperation with the third countries promoted more under this programme comparing to before to increase the connection between European citizens and third-country nationals.

Table 1.1.The European Programmes in Support of Youth 1998-2013

Programme	Budget Allocation (MioEUR)	Number of Participants (thousands)
Youth for Europe I	19,5	75
Youth for Europe II	31,6	75
Youth for Europe III	48,4	399
European Voluntary Service	145,1	5
Youth	48,4	852
Youth in Action	715,7	1.153
Total of 25 years	2.091,0	2.559

Resource : EU Youth Programmes 1988-2013 (EC,2014)

As it can be seen above in the Table 1. *The European Programmes in Support of Youth* table provided by European Commission to reflect the amount of funding and constant increase on the number of participants with the inclusion of the other countries in the program in each programming year (EC,2014). The success of Youth for Europe I,II,III led the European Commission to develop a more comprehensive programme and emphasize more in the involvement of disadvantaged young people. Conversely, the program was criticised due lack of

data in *“SPECIAL REPORT No 2/2002 on the Socrates and Youth for Europe Community action programmes, together with the Commission’s replies”* due to complexity of the programs and decentralisation of the management systems (EC,2002). Additionally, the indicators set were coarse and reflect only the quantitative results of the program such as number of mobilities, number of participants or the amount of the funding.

The Interim Evaluation Report of “Youth” Community Action Programme (EC,2003) comes with the variety of the suggestions concerning the implementation of the program. The age bracket within the programme as 15-25 within the program had specific concern due to lack of consensus between the EU members. Further, the emphasis upon the young people with fewer opportunities was repeated while the development of regional and local information points were suggested to reach out these groups specifically the marginalized youth (EC,2008d). Consequently, it can be argued that the establishment of the EACEA as well as the strengthening the linkage between Eurodesk Network³ and Youth Programs was the consequence of these suggestions.

Between 2007-2011, 725.000 participants benefited from Youth in Action Programme. It considered as successful which the overall evaluation of the program indicates. During the program, the participants feedbacks concerning the program was aligning with the European youth objectives. It showed that majority of young people increased their skills in the matter of foreign language and they believed that their job opportunities increased with their participation to mobilities as they have gained new skills (EC,2012).

In the *“Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a single Education, Training, Youth and Sport Programme for the period 2014-2020”* document proposed four solutions with respect to future of

3 Eurodesk Network : <https://www.eurodesk.eu>

programmes focusing on the Education, Training, Youth and Sport as they were extended as “*Status quo – continuation of LLP*”, “*No action*”, “*Strengthening the objectives of the current programme*” and “*A single programme for education, training, youth and sport: strengthening objectives and impact through concentration and streamlined architecture*” (EC,2011). Among these four solutions, the single programme for solution was followed due to several reasons such as increasing the synergies between the different sectors of education, youth and sports, simplifying the application procedures. As a result, that proposal led the development of the Erasmus+ Programme.

Erasmus+ Programme developed as an umbrella program that incorporated the other European Union programs focusing on higher, vocational, school and adult education and Sport program. The Erasmus+ Programme were planned to be implemented between the 1st of January 2014 to the 31st of December 2020. Erasmus+ programme aimed to contribute to strategies of European Union such as Europe 2020 strategy, Education and Training Strategic Framework (ET2020), European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018) and promote the European values and develop European cooperation in grassroots sport. Under Erasmus+ Programme, the youth field were separated under several “*Key Actions*” such as “*Key Action 1: Learning mobility of Individuals*”, “*Key Action:2 Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices*”, “*Key Action:3 Support for Policy Reform*”. European Voluntary Service has been implemented under “*KAI: Learning Mobility of Individuals*” by keeping the same structure though changing the application procedure of the projects. (EC,2013).

The Erasmus+ had more overreach than YiA programme run between 2017-2013 as the statistics illustrates. The short-term mobility schemes such as youth exchanges and mobility of youth workers were separated from Volunteering section as European Voluntary Service in 2018 and later on this led to the development of European Solidarity Corps Programme.

Table 1.2.Erasmus+ Statistics 2014-2019

	Number of Projects Contracted	Total Amount of Funding (in EURs)	Total Number of Participants	Total Number of Activities
2014	5.749	125.695.070	151.395	7.612
2015	5.543	124.973.920	150.522	8.527
2016	5.772	130.633.945	157.609	9.124
2017	5.969	145.363.570	158.231	9.487
2018 Total	5.440	143.439.227	164.877	8.624
Youth*	3.744	93.918.861	155.355	5.501
Volunteering*	1.696	49.520.366	9.522	3.123
2019	4.255	107.237.004	121.535	6.100
2018-2019 ESC	2.685	105.653.466	21.356	-

* In 2018, Youth and Volunteering Programs were separated calls.

Resource : Erasmus+ Statistical Annexes (2014-2019)⁴

According to “*Mid-term evaluation of the Erasmus+ programme (2014-2020)*” (EC, 2018), Erasmus+ is more adaptable to the changing needs concerning social issues in Europe than its predecessors. Furthermore, it boosted the cross-sectoral collaboration due to its structure as umbrella program rather than solely depending on one sector like YiA, Youth or Youth for Europe programme. Due to its comprehensiveness and differentiation from its predecessor programs, Erasmus+ program objectives focused not only the youth field. However, it addressed the challenges in Higher Education, School Education Adult Education, Vocational Education and Sport. Moreover, as it can be seen in *Table 2. Erasmus+ Statistics 2014-2019*, ESC funding has increased the outreach of the volunteering programs twice as being a separate program.

⁴ Statistical Annexes can be reached from here : https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/about/statistics_en

European Voluntary Service after 20th year anniversary gave its place to European Solidarity Corps. Besides the European Voluntary Service being implemented under Youth Field, there has been different volunteering programs focusing on the young people under different programmes of EU such as LIFE, Europe for Citizens, Interreg, Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI), European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and; Health Programme. Thus, as it is indicated in the development of the framework on European Solidarity Corps, even the bigger proportion of these events taking place under EVS, these volunteering schemes were as well incorporated under European Solidarity Corps. Furthermore, the program was developed to address the high demand of both organizations and young people by indicating that more than 8.000 volunteering placements were unfunded in 2016 (EC,2017). Even though the European Voluntary Service planned to be implemented during the program duration until the 31st of December 2020, in 20th anniversary of EVS, the EVS was evolved to European Solidarity Corps programme to address not only the issues in Europe but promote solidarity.

The European Solidarity Corps' main aim is to promote solidarity among the European Union citizens and the universal values of the union. The program is fundamentally developed to address the skill-development of young people and provide an opportunity for young people to gain human experience while volunteering. On the other hand, the ESC has additional characteristic differentiating itself from previously mentioned programs as job and traineeship opportunities. Furthermore, it involved the solidarity projects where the young people take initiatives rather than the organisations(EU,2018).

The renewal of the program was based on the experiences gained from the previous programmes. During the development of the program, the incorporation of the job opportunities was developed to address the issue of long-term employment of young people in the member states of the EU. Further, in-country volunteering programs are incorporated within the program as a complementary feature

(EU,2018). In-country volunteering used to be covered with the national volunteering schemes though only in certain western countries like Germany, France and the UK. ESC developed an opportunity to do in-country volunteering for young people who are unwilling to go abroad to be involved in the program.

1.1.1. European Solidarity Corps

The European Solidarity Corps program (EU, 2018) consists of four program strands: volunteering, traineeships and jobs, solidarity projects, networking activities and support and quality measures. The volunteering activities between 2014 to 2018 has been implemented under the Erasmus+ Programme. In 2019, the volunteering strand of the program had been removed from Erasmus+ and continued to be implemented under ESC after 2019. For 2019-2020, the budget is allocated as 375.6 million EURs. Nevertheless, the program has job and traineeship and in-country volunteering activities differ from the EVS, 90% of the budget were allocated for the international volunteering activities, and 20% of this budget is allocated for in-country volunteering. Even so, According to the *European Solidarity Corps Report (2018-2019)* (EC,2020), only 3% of the budget was contracted for in-country volunteering. Despite being eligible as program country; Sweden, Greece, Belgium, Cyprus or UK haven't involved in job and traineeship activities during the first two programming years.

Table 1.3.Eligible Program Countries involved in ESC

Member States of the European Union (EU)				
Belgium	Greece	Lithuania	Portugal	Finland
Bulgaria	Spain	Luxembourg	Romania	Sweden
Czechia	France	Hungary	Slovenia	United Kingdom
Denmark	Croatia	Malta	Slovakia	Austria
Germany	Italy	Netherlands	Poland	Cyprus
	Latvia	Ireland	Estonia	
Non-EU participating countries				
Iceland	Republic of North Macedonia		Turkey	

Resource : *European Solidarity Corps Guide 2019 Call. European Commission*

Furthermore, over 21.000 participants were benefited from the activities took place under Volunteering strand. First 5 countries involved in the volunteering activities were France, United Kingdom, Romania, Turkey and Italy. The striking fact is that, even though, the funding allocated for the Romanian organizations, is less than the other countries; Romania were one of the countries which sent more volunteers to abroad than the others.

Table 1.4.Eligible Partner Countries involved in ESC

Partner countries neighbouring the EU				
Western Balkans	Eastern Partnership	South-Mediterranean countries		Russian Federation
Albania	Armenia	Algeria	Libya	Territory of Russia as recognised by international law
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Azerbaijan	Egypt	Morocco	
Kosovo	Belarus	Israel	Palestine	
Montenegro	Georgia	Jordan	Syria	
Serbia	Moldova	Lebanon	Tunisia	
	Ukraine as recognised by international law			
EFTA Countries				
Norway		Liechtenstein		

Resource : European Solidarity Corps Guide 2019 Call.

The eligibility for the individuals to participate in the ESC activity is based on age and residence criteria. Any individual aged between 17-30 living in the countries indicated in the Table 3. and Table 4. are eligible to participate. In the first programming years of ESC, majority of young volunteers (76.7%) were less than 25 years old and 68.1% of them were female. Furthermore, it shows that comparing to volunteering activities under Erasmus+, the participation of the young people with fewer opportunities in Volunteering activities increased due to different measures taken within the ESC programme such as inclusion support for young people with fewer opportunities(EC,2020).

Unlike the participation of young people, participation of the organizations bases on the acquirement of Quality. Label. Quality Label regulates the principles of ESC while the NAs are the responsible of the provision of QL to the organizations. QL depends on an application made by the entity willing to participate in the European Solidarity Corps. In this application, the organization should demonstrate that it internalises the principle of equal treatment and opportunities, refrainment from the job replacement while providing high-quality learning activities focused on the volunteer's professional, social, educational and personal development in a safe environment, decent living conditions for the volunteer. In addition, the organizations should internalise the no-profit principle within their structures to be able to acquire QL.

After the application made to EACEA or NA based in the hosting organizations' country assesses the application towards the principles mentioned above. In the event of that the application complies with these principles, the EACEA or NA provides the QL (EACEA,2019). The responsible body for implementing the European Solidarity Corps at European Level is EACEA and in-country level, the National Agencies in the programme countries. Moreover, the SALTO-Youth Resource Centers are responsible for the monitoring and evaluation of the ESC activities taking place in partner countries.

As it is mentioned in European Solidarity Corps Guide in 2019 (EACEA, 2019), ESC developed for solidarity through volunteering and to increase the young volunteer's engagement in accessible and high-quality activities to contribute the European citizenship, solidarity, democracy and cohesion in Europe as well as the European cooperation. Furthermore, ESC has key features such as social inclusion, non-formal and informal learning, recognition and validation of learning outcomes, European added value, international dimension, multilingualism, protection and safety of participants, dissemination and exploitation of project results. Projects

regardless they are implemented under job, solidarity or volunteering strands of ESC, they have to cover all those features up to a certain level.

Table 1.5. Thematic Areas of European Solidarity Corps Projects

Agriculture, forestry and fisheries	Inclusion	Skills development
Citizenship and democratic participation	Physical education and sport	Social assistance and welfare
Climate action, environment and nature protection	Reception and integration of third-country nationals	Territorial cooperation and cohesion
Community development	Research and innovation	Transport and mobility
Culture	Rural development and urban regeneration	Youthwork
Disaster prevention, preparedness and recovery	Equality and non-discrimination	Health and wellbeing
Education and training	European identity and values	Human rights
Employability and entrepreneurship		

Resource : European Solidarity Corps Report (EC,2020)

The ESC projects focus on the thematic areas that concerns Europe as it is indicated in Table 5. Thematic Areas of European Solidarity Corps Projects. During the project application, the applicants has to make a choice between 3 themes among the themes mentioned in Table 5. In past two years, the most addressed 5 thematic area among 3750 projects within Volunteering, Solidarity and Traineeship/Jobs funding strands, have been inclusion (1235 projects), youth work (1003 projects), community development (946 projects), education and training (885 projects), citizenship and democratic participation(823 projects)(EC,2020). Henceforth, it might be said that the ESC has achieved its aims to contribute European citizenship, solidarity, democracy and social cohesion in Europe through the projects take place in past two years.

1.1.2. Quality Label and Role of Organizations

Quality Label is a pre-requirement for the involvement of the organizations in volunteering activities in programme countries. Even though, obtainment of QL does not provide direct access to a grant within ESC for the organizations. Quality Label is provided to the two types of organizations as sending and host organization. During the programming period of 2018-2020, the EVS Accreditation for the coordinating, sending and hosting organizations are considered valid until 2020 (EACEA,2019) due to the similarity between the programs.

The quality label applications are assessed by two criteria: “*Relevance and quality of management within the organization*”. The quality of management criteria varies according to their role (as host or sending organization) and type of involvement (volunteering, job or traineeship). In relevance criteria, the organisations' aims/activities should be in line with the principles and the extent of the benefits for the organization and volunteer put in place within ESC. Furthermore, the organisation's capacity to provide proper communication and coordination measures for activities, its support, guidance and monitoring policies and mechanisms, as well as its selection process, play a role for the obtainment of the QL (EACEA,2019). As mentioned in the next chapter under International Volunteering, the quality measures play an immense role in the success of the volunteering activities for both organizations and young people. In ESC, this comes as a predetermined feature with QL or the previously the accreditation under EVS.

Under Quality Label, two roles are given to the organizations as Sending and Host Organization. Sending Organization is responsible for selecting and matching the candidates registered in ESC Portal⁵ before their volunteering process and match them with the hosting organization. Their role is to provide effective coordination for project management (administrative and financial tasks) and provide pre-departure training for the volunteer. The pre-departure training aims to inform the

⁵ European Solidarity Corps Portal : https://europa.eu/youth/solidarity_en

volunteer regarding tasks in the host organization, provide language and cultural preparation. The sending organizations role does not end after the volunteering period of the volunteer; yet continues after the return of the volunteer. The sending organization is responsible for the re-integration of the volunteer to his/her community and provide a space for the volunteer to disseminate his/her experiences in his/her community.

Hosting Organization is responsible for providing various learning, mentoring and support during the stay of the volunteers and provide activities for the volunteers during their volunteering process. Hosting organization takes the responsibility of the recognition of the learning outcomes of the volunteer (provision of Youthpass⁶) and provides support for the volunteers related to tasks that the volunteer carries out as well as the integration to the host community. Even though ESC structured as a non-profit activity, the volunteer receives financial support priorly defined accordingly the country income level from the host organization for food allowance, pocket money, local transportation (EACEA,2019).

The abovementioned roles as hosting and sending organizations were defined as straightforward and did not change their structure with the changes in the programs. Within EVS, there was an additional type of organization as “Coordinating Organization”. Coordinating organizations were responsible for implementing the grant procedures related to contract and acting as a bridge organization between sending and host(receiving) organizations. In ESC, this role has been given to one of the organizations as an applicant. The roles of the organisations within European Solidarity Corps and European Voluntary Service are regulated with EVS⁷ and ESC Charters⁸. The organizations involved EVS previously and currently ESC, are subject to the quality standards put within those charters.

⁶ What is Youthpass? – Youthpass Portal : <https://www.youthpass.eu/en/about-youthpass/about/>

⁷ ESC Charter : https://europa.eu/youth/solidarity/charter_en

⁸ EVS Charter : https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-3121/Evs-charter_en.pdf

1.1.3. Types of Projects within the ESC under Volunteering Strand

The European Solidarity Corps projects under Volunteering Strand are divided as “*Individual Volunteering Projects*” and “*Volunteering Teams*”. **Individual Volunteering** projects can vary from 2 weeks to 12 months. The activities taking place less than two months is considered as short-term volunteering activities. These activities are mainly focused on young people with fewer opportunities⁹. The individual volunteering activities are classified as cross-border and in-country activities. (EACEA,2019).

Volunteering Teams projects focus on young people with fewer opportunities who are neither comfortable nor ready to be involved in individual volunteering activities. These activities are shorter than individual volunteering activities, and their duration is limited up to 2 months. In ESC activities, additional funding measure as inclusion support was put in place with ESC to overcome the challenges on the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities. Moreover, another additional feature of ESC is the complementary activities (local or international) inside of volunteering projects. These activities can vary from training courses, seminars or workshops as national or international activities.

Other projects that might be implemented under ESC are Job and Traineeship opportunities. However, as it is particular to member states and Turkey’s participation is not currently taken into account, this is not explained. Although, Turkey has been involved in **Solidarity projects** as a national activity, initiatives are developed by young people directly, not the organizations. The solidarity projects are in-country activities initiated by young people aged between 17-30 for a period from 2 to 12 months to address a certain within their country(EACEA,2019).

⁹ Definition of Young People with Fewer Opportunities (SALTO-Youth) : <https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/inclusion/archive/archive-resources/inclusiongroups/inclusionoffenders/InclusionOffendersWho/>

1.2. European Union Policy Papers on Youth

The rationale behind the development of the programs came from the policy papers on youth over the years. Thus, it is important to mention the policy papers before explaining youth programs. The milestone document of the European Youth strategy is the *"European Commission White Paper A New Impetus for European Youth"* in 2001. It followed by *"European Youth Pact"* in 2005, *"An EU Strategy for Youth: Investing and Empowering - A renewed open method of coordination to address youth challenges and opportunities"* in 2009, *"Engaging, Connecting and Empowering young people: a new EU Youth Strategy"* in 2018. Those documents strategically provided the framework and set the European Youth Programs and European Voluntary Service's objectives and priorities, and finally, the European Solidarity Corps.

European Commission White Paper: A New Impetus for European Youth

(EC,2001) focused on addressing the issues youth faced in the 2000s. It stated the issues concerning the youth living in EU states such as demographic and social change. Further, it addressed the lack of mechanisms for involvement of young people in decision-making mechanisms and the need behind the investment on quality of the debate on the future of EU. It interiorised the following principles:

- **Openness:** by providing knowledge in the language of youth to increase the understanding of young people concerning the EU
- **Participation:** by consulting the young people to involve them in decision-making processes concerning their communities
- **Accountability:** by creating structured forms of cooperation between the EU and member states to meet the needs of young people
- **Effectiveness:** by making the young people contribute to the success of the policies through benefiting from the youth
- **Coherence:** by building a perspective towards the youth policies and finding the ways to useful interventions

The White paper's development process was done in consultation with the involvement of different stakeholders in the field of youth such as young people, decision-makers, academics working in youth studies, and youth organizations. As a result following key messages were developed:

“Active Citizenship of Young People”: The voices of young people should be heard, and their opinions should be considered during the decision-making processes deliberatively.

“Expanding and recognising areas of experimentation”: Education is beyond the school environment with non-formal education and training. It should not be restricted to its traditional and formal aspects.

“Developing autonomy among young people”: Active citizenship of youth grounds upon the autonomy of young people which is vital as much as the income for youth. Thus, the youth policies should cover comprehensively not only to promote the active citizenship of young people but specific areas like employment, social protection and labour market integration.

“For a European Union as the champion of values”: Young people have values aligned with the European integration while regarding the institutions of the EU as inaccessible. As young people believe the EU's role in guaranteeing each individual's fundamental rights and the EU should promote those values.

The interim evaluation of Youth Programme 2000-2006 (EC,2003) demonstrates that the key messages identified within ***European Commission White Paper: A New Impetus for European Youth*** are achieved. At the same report, it indicates that the youth programs are contributed the participation of young people, increased their understanding towards European values and helped them to gain new skills. It reflects that the key messages steered the development of the youth programs and became the bedrock of EU Youth Programmes.

European Youth Pact (EU,2005) is contributed to historic European Youth Programmes' development after White Paper on Youth. It provided a structure by emphasising that Europe needs the ongoing commitment from young people to build an inclusive Europe. Within European Youth Pact, the principal issues identified as vulnerability of youth, intergenerational solidarity, necessity on increased involvement of young people to education and training, coherence between the policy areas such as employment, education among others which are concerning young people. Thus, It comprised three strands to address those principle issues as *"employment, integration and social advancement"*, *"education, training and mobility"*, *"reconciliation of family life and working life"*. Several strategies and work programmes such as the Social Inclusion Strategy and Education and Training Work Programme put in motion to address those strands and the principal issues. For promoting the mobility of young people, EC reinforced the European Voluntary Service Programme and Youth Programme. In the European Youth Pact document, the mobility of young people illustrated as a tool to support the active citizenship of young people.

As it is indicated in the Commission Report concerning ***"Final evaluation of the "Youth" Community action programme (2000-2006) and of the Community action programme to promote bodies active at European level in the field of youth (2004-2006)"*** (EC,2008) indicates that the Youth Programme contributed to the policy papers as White Paper and European Youth Pact and reach its objectives concerning promotion of active citizenship of young people and values of European Union. Within the report, it is as well mentioned that 62% of young people believed that the youth programs has increased their chances to involve in employment and 90% of young people indicated that their tolerance to other cultures is increased. While, this information underlines the relation of the programs with the impact of the EU policy papers up to this date such as White Paper and European Youth Pact on the development of the programs.

As a result of the programs and the complex changes in Europe led to development of ***“Renewed Social Agenda : Opportunities, access and solidarity in 21st century Europe”*** (EC,2008b). by referring the Treaty of Lisbon as well as emphasizing the dependency of Europe’s future on youth. Within the social agenda, the youth policies are focused on increasing the opportunities of young people to access education and training to prevent issues such as youth unemployment, early drop-out and the job-insecurity of young people. As a result of this policy paper, the another milestone paper on youth policies of EU is developed as ***An EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering (A renewed open method of coordination to address youth challenges and opportunities)*** (EU,2009) with a focus on investment and empowerment of young people. As the policy of *“investing in youth”* focused more on the provision of the extensive resources for the development of the policies impacts the daily life and well-being of youth. On the other hand, the empowerment aspect of the strategy aimed to promote young people's potential as a force to renew society and promote EU values and goals.

During the development phases of the abovementioned youth strategies, the concerns within EU related youth did not change. These concerns became more complex through the years while encompassing issues such as education, employment, social inclusion and health. Thus, the strategy focused on increasing the involvement of young people and equip them with new skills and knowledge to make the best of the opportunities provided for them. Five main areas were identified as a consequence of that as follows: *"civic and political participation", "volunteering", "creativity", "entrepreneurship", "sport and global engagement"*. Furthermore, strategy emphasised the success of European Youth Programmes since 1988 and their contribution to field of youth indicating their features regarding active citizenship of young people, social and occupational anti-discrimination and likewise issues.

The interim evaluation of the YiA Programme (EC,2011) shows the fact that the programme increased the active citizenship of young people and fostered the

participation of young people in civil society. Youth workers involved in the program generally indicated that their involvement to the activities increased their job satisfaction. Further, they gained skills that they would not be able to gain with their involvement to national activities. Henceforth, it shows that the youth programme run as a consequence of the policy paper contributed to the development of policies in a constructive manner.

Furthermore, it is crucial to emphasise that creating opportunities for young people has been the primary focus of the European policy papers on youth since the White Paper. In the last and current Youth strategy built upon the experiences gained from the programs and the previous policy papers to address the changed realities of youth in Europe. ***Engaging, Connecting and Empowering young people: a new EU Youth Strategy*** (EU,2018) is planned to be implemented between 2019-2027. Within the new youth strategy will implement activities focusing on the three aspects of the strategy as “Engage”, “Connect”, “Empower”. ***Engage element*** focuses on boosting the participation of young people in decision-making processes. ***Connect element*** focuses on social participation of young people by promoting the mobilities for learning, volunteering solidarity and intercultural understanding among young people. ***Empower element*** focuses on the support for the youth empowerment by increasing the quality and recognition of youth and promoting innovation in the youth field. It is clear that Erasmus+ Program and ESC work on the “Connect” aspect of the strategy. Both programs aim to increase the participation of young people through cross-border mobility activities and solidarity activities. It can be concluded that, the European Youth Policies are planned and executed to increase young people's living standards and capabilities while promoting European citizenship of young people. Moreover, the programs were also seen as a tool to promote European values.

2. INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEERING

The voluntarism is an ambiguity term and changes its particular definition regarding context that it is argued. In most generic words, volunteering is an activity that is a non-obligatory, unpaid and takes place in an organized structure (Dekker&Halman,2003). Volunteering has several beneficiaries such as community, volunteer and the organizations involved. Further, Holmes and Smith (2010) add the aspect of mutual beneficial effect to this terminology. As said, when the volunteer involves within the community, the beneficiary is not only the community but also the volunteer. In ESC projects, this feature plays a vital role as they promote the community involvement of the volunteers and the solidarity between the citizens of the EU and neighbouring countries.

Even volunteering is a mainstream word for us today, it has not a long historical aspect. Volunteering programs run by governments firstly developed as a civic service instead of military service. Until the late 1990s, it was obligatory to choose between military service or the civic service; in other words, volunteering(Smith,2004). Even though this practice is relinquished, it contributed the development of the volunteering mechanisms in the EU. The international volunteering programs are firstly developed followingly by governments and non-governmental organizations around the world. In this chapter, the literature referred developed within variety of volunteering programs such as VSO by United Kingdom, Kulturweit by Germany, Service Civique by France or PeaceCorps by United States of America or United Nations Volunteers Programme.

Initially, these programs were planned to export the volunteers as international experts to underdeveloped countries rather than young people. During the development of those programs, two approaches were used: “participant-centred” and “society-centred” (Lough&Tiessen,2018). In participant-centred approaches, the program is focused more the skill development of the volunteer than the benefit of the local community as primary beneficiary of it is the volunteer. In society-centred approaches, host organization and the volunteers are expected to provide

their skills, knowledge and capacity to implement activities. On the contrary, the primary beneficiary of the volunteering program is the community in society-centred approaches.

International volunteering programs are consistently categorized into two clusters: international volunteering for international understanding and international volunteering for humanitarian relief. Due to its nature, international volunteering for international understanding, the volunteers are the primary beneficiary. The volunteering activity outcome is generally considered the participants' skill development and increased cultural awareness. It is worth emphasising that international volunteering for international understanding is leaning to the side of "participant-centred" approach while international volunteering for humanitarian relief to the side of "society-centred" approach. On the contrary, international volunteering for humanitarian relief focuses on society and expects the volunteers to create tangible impact within their volunteering period (Lough&Tiessen,2018). That is why both volunteering schemes have different target groups.

When we discuss both approaches within EU Volunteering programs (EVS/ESC and EUAid Volunteers), the EVS/ESC falls into the category of international volunteering for international understanding. Yet, EUAid Volunteer program falls into the category of international volunteering for humanitarian aid (EU,2020). As it is discussed above, both programs have different target groups, To elaborate, target group of EVS/ESC are the young people with low-skill level or without studies while to participate in EUAid programmes, the volunteers have at least university education and/or have an experience on the field that they are going to volunteer. Henceforth, it can be said that the characteristic of ESC/EVS is focusing on international understanding and based participant centred approach.

Smith (2004) defines transnational volunteering as an opportunity for young people to self-realize themselves while helping others. Thus, the nature, activities and the recruitment strategies of the volunteering programs are highly different. In

EVS/ESC activities, the activities are often provided as an experience to volunteers, and the leading target group is considered volunteers rather than the local community.

Although the volunteerism is considered as unpaid, the financial benefit from the volunteering by the host organization is incontestable. The volunteer provides a human resource for the organizations to implement their activities. These activities presumably could not be implemented and require a financial resource if the volunteers would not exist in the organizations (Hackl, et al., 2012). In underdeveloped countries, international volunteers provide social services to the people living in poverty and object to discrimination. During this process, the volunteers develop skills and cultural awareness. At the same time, their global citizenship is promoted, and they become aware of the issues of social justice (Lough,2014). In these cases, international volunteering programs are covering the need for the social services of the people, and the volunteers take the place of the professionals.

Similarly, in EVS/ESC; the young people are involving to project and helping the organizations in their work with hardest-to-reach target groups. Often the projects and initiatives taken by the volunteers continued and created an impact in the target groups of the organizations. Concerning the organizations involved in this study, this fact is relatively clear. Even though they are youth organizations, they are providing activities for refugees, children with illnesses within ESC/EVS projects. During those activities, not only the community benefits but the volunteers' sense of initiative as well as the sense of solidarity increases.

Furthermore, the volunteers are given space to initiate their own projects as to help them to develop sense of initiative. The projects that the volunteers initiate often runs after the volunteers' return (Brandenburg,2017). It helps the volunteer to take an initiative to implement activity according to ones' interest while increasing the sense of initiative of the volunteer.

International Volunteering Programs has different structures such as hosting and sending organizations. The sending organizations' role as in EVS/ESC is to support and prepare the volunteer priorly to their volunteering activity (Brandenburg,2017; Lough&Tiessen,2018). In addition to that, the volunteer's positive or negative experience evidently depends on the relations between sending and hosting organizations. Often the financial constrains for the sending organizations in EVS/ESC results with a lack of constant support for the volunteers before, during or after the volunteering period. In addition to that, the hosting or sending organizations often do not have financial or human capacity to accommodate the needs of the volunteers with special needs; or with low level of skills or education as they would need constant supervision (Brandenburg,2017). Henceforth, the organisations tend to select volunteers with experience, skills and knowledge as they do not need supervision or require additional resource to involve in the volunteering. Even the sending organisation is willing to involve the volunteer with fewer opportunities such as with disabilities, the projects often do not provide an additional support for them or takes too long to find a suitable placement for the volunteer.

The outcomes of the volunteering changes with the duration of the volunteering program (Sherraden, et al., 2008). In long-term assignments, the volunteers tend to create meaningful and long-lasting relations with the community and host organization (Lough&Tiessen,2018) In ESC/EVS, the duration is the essential factor for the volunteers to create meaningful connections with the community, along with the frequency of the activities (Brandenburg,2017). It is also argued that the short-term assignments are merely focused on the volunteer's personal development than the community or the host organization itself (Diprose,2012). In addition to duration, the volunteering format such as "group volunteering" or "individual volunteering" within ESC/EVS is another essential factor. The volunteers coming from different countries involving in the activities together are more likely to develop sufficient cultural awareness due to interaction between each

other. Although, when young people participate as a group from the same country to a volunteering activity, it comes with challenges to create cultural awareness or promote international understanding (Lough&Tiessen,2018). As the focus of the group volunteering activities is the young people with fewer opportunities, who do not often have adequate level of language or do not want to engage with the others due to cultural differences. These situations led the volunteer engage only with his/her own group rather than the other volunteers or the local community. Their communication stays shallow in comparison to the volunteers involve in individual volunteering activities.

On the other hand, the intercultural aspect of the international volunteering activities gives a volunteer a chance to involve in informal learning activities as the program aims of EVS/ESC promotes. Furthermore, intercultural learning plays a role of deconstructing the images given in the media and the volunteer's experiences, specifically with the refugee populations. In this regard, individuals' openness to move out from his/her comfort zone helps one change ones' beliefs and develop new knowledge or break the old habits (Sandu & Lyamouri-Bajja, 2018). With respect to EVS/ESC, the informal learning opportunities during the activities create an impact directly on the personal development of the individual and help the volunteer to gain new skills, perceptions and knowledge throughout its course.

Alike in EVS/ESC, the international volunteering activities are primarily covered public or private funds even sometimes by the participants on the contrary to the non-paid feature of the volunteering. The volunteers involved in international volunteering receive small payments for their travel expenses, allowances and provided accommodation and food during their stay (Dekker&Halman,2003). Sometimes, in EVS/ESC activities, the participants need to put from their pocket to cover their expenses. At the same country, all the volunteers receive the same amount. However, volunteers in capital cities are having difficulties to live with the allowance that they are provided. On the other hand, even they are provided by

travel expenses within the budget calculated from “distance calculator”¹⁰ tool, the volunteers often have to bear additional costs regarding travel (Brandenburg,2017). It can be argued that this issue might hinder the participation of young people with fewer opportunities, specifically with economic obstacles.

In this chapter, international volunteering is discussed by focusing on the general framework concerning worldwide international volunteering programs. They have several similar points with EVS/ESC such as duration of the program, the interaction with the local community, financial aspects and the volunteer's skills, and the organizations' structure along with the activities. In next sub-chapter, I discussed the young volunteer's profile, motivations and their involvement process to the international volunteering and after their voluntary service, specifically EVS/ESC.

2.1.Young Volunteers

The criteria to involve in international volunteering programs changes with the rules set within the programs. It generally depends on the age strata as like most policy papers. Some programs include young people between 17-25, some 15-30. This age strata depends on the socio-economic factors, the involvement in education and employment of young people (Bendit,2006). However, the involvement of young people and the stages of being youth vary differently due to different factors such as economic, socio-cultural, demographics of the family of the young (Perovic,2012) volunteer. This situation is considered in the policy papers of EU comprehensively with a particular focus to young people with fewer opportunities (EC,2001).

It is widely argued in the volunteering literature that the likelihood to involve in international volunteering activities depends on the volunteers' socio-demographic

¹⁰ Distance Calculator : http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/tools/distance_en.htm

characters such as income, age, employment status and educational level (McBride&Lough,2010). According to Sherraden et al. (2008) these characteristics also impact the quality and efficiency of the international voluntary service. According to the study done by Willems and Dury (2017) with the individuals aged more than 18, the individuals who enrolled at university or married or have a family are more likely to involve in international volunteering less than the other people. Similarly, In EVS/ESC, the volunteer's involvement depends on the same characteristic as education; most of the volunteers are graduated from higher education (Brandenburg,2017). These previous studies on the volunteer's involvement in international volunteering demonstrates that the education level plays a role in the participation of the volunteers.

Besides education and the income level, social networks play a role in the involvement in volunteering activity (Haski-Leventhal, et al.,2008). As like the participation, household income level is one of the predictions of likelihood to involve volunteering (Lee & Won, 2018). Thus, it can be argued that the volunteers who have social and human capital are involved in EVS/ESC activities more than the other young people. Another reason to involve in the international volunteering is the prior exposure of the host country (Sherraden et al. ,2008) or previous volunteering experience in his/her community (Brandenburg,2017). In that way, young people become aware of the benefits of volunteering in their community. In addition to that, when they visit the host-country, they become exposed to the culture that they are going to live in a shallow matter. Even though, it is in a shallow matter, it can be said that; it increases their involvement in that particular country to volunteering activities.

After classifying the reasons with regard to involvement in international volunteering, there is a need to discuss the reasons behind the people's non-involvement to volunteering. Usually, involving volunteering becomes a burden for the person due to lack of time or physical situations. In addition to that, often they

do not consider any benefits from the volunteering or they are not aware of the opportunities provided (Willems&Dury,2017).

In EVS/ESC, those issues are mainly the concern of the host and sending organizations even though there are instruments to facilitate the participation of people with fewer opportunities such as long-term unemployment or disabilities or without language abilities. The volunteer selection criteria is a result of the previously explained situation. Even the people want to volunteer; they cannot be involved in the volunteering activities due to their language and education level or their skills (Loiseau, et al.,2016). The volunteering organizations expect the volunteer to have a particular skill set, language or education level to participate in the volunteering activity. However, it is not always the case. On the contrary, in specific volunteering projects, the volunteers' skillset is less critical, but the volunteer's motivation to involve activities with the particular target group (Sherraden, et al., 2008). The volunteers with lower skill-set are not aware of the possible damages that they can produce even with good intentions due to lack of sufficient skills to work with particular target groups. Henceforth, it can be said that the volunteers with fewer skills become more liability than aide in humanitarian-aid volunteering activities.

Holdsworth (2010) defines the reasons towards volunteering in three dimensions: employability, values and opportunity. The employability focuses on the skill-development of the volunteer and what the volunteer can receive from the volunteering activity. Values focus on the personal-value orientations such as religious beliefs, helping behaviour or tendency to work with the others. Opportunity poses itself as to receive credits for studies or to involve volunteering as a leisure activity. According to Brandenburg (2017), these reasons vary from doing something good to an escaping from the precarious situations.

While to help others and do something good is the motivation, the volunteers expect something in return. Most of the cases, the volunteers involve in volunteering to

increase their employability. In EVS/ESC; the young people experience real work in a secure and supported environment, the volunteer gains work experience without struggle with the cruel labour market. Additionally, the volunteer has an experience to live abroad which is often considered as a valuable experience in the labour market (Şenyuva & Nicodemi,2017). Thus, the volunteer's employability increases with their involvement in the EVS/ESC activities. On the other hand, several examples show that ex-EVS volunteers become NGO workers or are involved in the third sector by taking different roles. When the volunteers create a bonding relationship with their sending organizations, the sending organizations often support them after the volunteering process to get employed or involve in the volunteering activities. As it is common practice among the EVS/ESC volunteers that, the volunteers apply in volunteering activity before their studies or involving in the labour market. When the aftermath of international volunteering is reviewed, it is evident that the volunteer's involvement in education, employment or local volunteering activities increases (Brandenburg, 2017).

Furthermore, as mentioned in “European Youth Report” published in 2012, youth participation in volunteering creates an impact on social and economic cohesion. Even the volunteer only benefits from the activities; they become an active agent of change within their communities. As a result, they become the multiplier of their experiences and promote solidarity within their communities. Moreover, the involvement of young people under the risk of exclusion to volunteering promotes their inclusion and active citizenship (EU,2012).

The volunteering benefits on young people regardless; it is international or local. It is argued that volunteering creates a positive effect on the community while making a positive impact on volunteer oneself. The awareness and sense of initiative of young people increase towards issues within their communities such as violence, drug abuse and drop-outs from the school. As they volunteer with the sense of helping behaviour, they gain self-confidence and inner motivation to involve in society more (Haski-Leventhal, et al.,2008). Henceforth, it can be argued that

volunteering not only promotes skill development but creates a long-lasting impact on individuals' life.

One of commonly argued theme of international volunteering literature is cultural awareness. Young people are often coming from their own countries with their identical culture. This identical culture often appreciated or not by the community that the volunteer involves. As a result, the volunteer finds oneself in a situation where one excludes oneself from the local community in a negative way or on the contrary, involves the local population more positively (Çakı,2011). As It was mentioned before that the volunteers involved from different countries in a group volunteering activity engage more with each other than the local community even they do their volunteering individually. It is evident that it increases the volunteer's cultural awareness towards different cultures, though, the volunteers continue to be unaware of the local culture.

Another situation worth mentioning is the drop-out of the volunteers. When the activities of the organizations and the volunteers' motivation/expectations are not aligned; the volunteers tend to drop-out from the volunteering program. Another issue for the young people for not to be involved in volunteering is the volunteers have a low level of accountability/responsibility due to tasks given (Willems & Dury, 2017). The volunteers are provided an opportunity to involve in the activities that the organizations are already implementing, and they have staff to run them. Due to this reason, the "potential" volunteers often have a tendency to think that their presence does not matter as they would not have any responsibility rather than helping to the people already implementing the activities. Therefore, the structure of the activities and given opportunities to the volunteers to take their initiatives play a role to increase the involvement of the volunteer and prevent drop-out.

2.2.Organizations involved in Volunteering

The structure of the organizations plays a vital role in the volunteering process. While the volunteer gains skills and benefits from the volunteering process, the

organizations benefit due to their increased human resource capacity. The organizations providing volunteering activities do not solely have to be non-profit. They could be private and public organizations as well (Sherraden, et al., 2008). According to the Erasmus+ and ESC Guideline, the organizations can be profit making as well (EACEA,2019; EACEA,2017). Thus, the volunteering might create a financial benefit for the hosting/sending organizations.

The volunteers, most of the time, work as an aide to social workers. This situation creates a massive impact on the volunteer as the volunteer experiences to work directly by reducing the workload of the staff and often taking the place of the staff to implement activities (Loiseau, et al.,2016). On the other hand, the volunteers taking the initiative with the host communities gains new skills during their volunteering period. This increases the volunteer's involvement in the organization and their sense of ownership in the organization. Moreover, after the volunteers return, the volunteers help their hosting organizations to network internationally.

The training opportunities and support mechanisms for the volunteers are the main characteristics of the international volunteering programs. These characteristic vary from language training, coaching or mentoring support (Sherraden, et al., 2008). International volunteering programs provided by governments and intergovernmental institutions like the EU (Brandenburg,2017) and the UN, these features as language training, coaching or mentoring support are the prerequisite of the programs (UNV,2020). These training opportunities are provided to prepare the volunteer for tasks within the host organization, the information regarding the program, or the cultural aspect of the host country. Most of the cases, those training activities are carried out by sending organizations or the National Agency of the country where the volunteer is resident.

Understanding the impact of the volunteers on the hosting organizations is not an easy task. Volunteers tend to think that they do not create any impact or influence on the hosting organizations. One of the reason behind this thought is that; they are

not directly involved with the host organization but working with the other organizations that the host organization cooperates to provide activities for them within their projects (Brandenburg,2017). It is a widespread practice in EVS/ESC projects that the volunteers carry out tasks outside of the host organization. The activities often run by other organizations like schools or community centres.

The volunteers mainly work with the disadvantaged target groups where they are subject to emotional labour as much as the staff of the hosting organizations. Emotional labour is frequently considered a display of the emotion to earn a commodity. The social workers specifically while working in the carer of the other, have to suppress their feelings due to the situations the job puts them in. This situation might lead to a burnout of the worker or puts the worker in a vulnerable position. The worker loses his/her boundary while working with his/her clients(Bray,2011). The support mechanisms of the volunteers such as mentoring, and coaching is another side of the coin concerning the hosting organization staff.

That happens in the EVS/ESC organizations in both ways between volunteers and the staff of the organization and the volunteers and the beneficiaries of the hosting organization. The support staff within the hosting organizations such as mentors/supervisors or coordinators are responsible for the volunteers. The mentors' tasks are not often clearly defined within the small organizations, and they become the caretaker of the volunteers. Their relationship with the volunteers becomes the main concerning topic during the volunteering program. That situation time to time led to the good outcomes or ends with the burn out of the staff. On the other hand, the volunteers involved with the disadvantaged populations cannot cope with the stress developed due to emotional labour, which leads to demotivation and drop-out.

In this regard, volunteer management plays a huge role while working with volunteers. Even though there are clear-cut quality measures for volunteer management within EVS/ESC, there are setbacks for the small organizations. They

do not have enough capacity to recruit staff to manage the volunteers or monitor them during the activities. As a result, the volunteers are frustrated about their tasks or they feel unsupported, which often ends up with the drop-out of the volunteer (Brandenburg, 2017). In addition to that, the volunteer management consistency during the volunteering period is as well essential. When the person responsible for the volunteer leaves the organization, the connection between volunteer and organization is damaged (Ertas, 2019). Henceforth, it might be said that the volunteer management in small scale organizations is one of the issues during volunteering. The small-scale volunteering organizations do not have constant staff who is responsible or clear-cut volunteering management policy. That results with the overburden of the staff and reduces the quality of the volunteering activity.

The sending organizations are responsible for the volunteer's selection, preparation and deployment. The volunteer's preparation process about tasks within the hosting organization and the culture of the host community is in the hands of the sending organization. Thus, the sending organization's relation with the hosting organization is crucial for the quality of the volunteering process. Mainly, the sending and hosting organizations relations based on the interpersonal relationships between the staff of the organizations. It impacts to the stay of the volunteers and prevents the risk of drop-outs and demotivation of the volunteer. Well-informed volunteer tends to stay more than the unprepared volunteer. Moreover, the sending organizations' work does not end after the volunteer's return, but it continues (Vveinhardt, et al., 2019) as the sending organizations' role is to help the volunteer to reintegrate his/her community. Considering this aspect of the volunteering, the volunteer and hosting organization relation with the sending organization is one of the factors that impact the benefit of the volunteer and both organizations.

The last aspect concerning involved organizations is funding. International Volunteering activities are costly concerning local volunteering activities. The volunteers are provided costs for travel, allowance, food and accommodation, and

often these expenses provided by funding organizations are not enough for the organizations or the volunteers. In EVS/ESC, the organizational costs are supplied on a flat-rate basis as the volunteer allowance (EACEA,2019) These expenses sometimes are not enough for the volunteers who are doing their service in capital or metropolitan cities due to high living costs. As the burden of the accommodation and staff costs are covered from the organizational support provided to organizations, the organization has to bear additional costs. It reflects the volunteers' experience as well concerning financial issues (Brandenburg,2017). On the other hand, the volunteering activities are not “core-based” funding for the host organizations to help their operational costs but depending on particular projects (Lough & Allum,2013). That results with the small organizations to cover their overhead costs by reducing the staff costs or the other costs allocated for the volunteer and effects the quality of the volunteering activity.

3. INVOLVEMENT OF TURKEY IN EUROPEAN YOUTH PROGRAMS AND ORGANIZATIONS IN SOUTH-EAST TURKEY

Turkey's involvement in European Youth programs dates back to 2001. Although the full involvement of Turkey in the EU Youth Programs with the signature of Memorandum of Understanding in 2004. Turkish NA as responsible body for the implementation and monitoring of the programs were established at the same year. YOUTH programme was implemented between 2003-2006 in Turkey with the same framework established in the EU (Yıldırım&Adnan,2007). After the implementation of YOUTH programme and its success in Turkey, Turkey continuously participated the EU Youth Programs as YiA and Erasmus+ and finally European Solidarity Corps.

According to the *“National Report On Implementation And Impact Assessment Of The Youth Community Action Programme (2003-2006)”* (Yıldırım&Adnan,2007) published by Turkish NA shows the fact that YOUTH program had a positive impact on the social and professional development of young people. Although, the visibility of the program and accessibility of the program were criticized as it is stated in the report that majority of the beneficiaries do not have any knowledge neither National Agency nor the projects that they involved. Thus, the recommendation was to increase the visibility of the “YOUTH” programme in information resources and mainstream media. Furthermore, it was as well recommended to develop an approach to increase the capacities of young people for developing projects and provide detailed feedback mechanisms for the evaluation procedures of the projects. Turkey was included in the middle of the program in 2004, the YOUTH program was not popular comparing to the other programs in the youth field among the organizations.

After the “YOUTH” Community Action Programme, Turkey's participation to Youth programs continued with the Youth in Action Programme. In between 2007-

2013, in Youth in Action, Turkey benefited the highest allocation along with Germany, France, Spain, Italy, Poland and UK (ECORYS,2011) as only program country outside of European Union. In the first half programming year of Youth in Action, more than 10.000 young people from Turkey involved in the activities taking place in Europe (EC,2012). “*Interim Evaluation of Youth in Action Programme*” implemented in 2011 (ECORYS,2011b) shows the fact that in Turkey among other countries, most of the young people who participated in YiA activities fall into the young people with fewer opportunities group (%64 among the all Turkish participants). Additionally, it as well indicates that the young people in Turkey tend to participate again to the youth activities as 8% of the Turkish youth involved in the study indicated that they have participated a youth activity before. Even though YiA aims to promote European citizenship and belonging to EU, the Turkish participants did not have sense of belonging to EU but with higher proportion than the Dutch and Swedish participants involved in the study. It shows that the young people in Turkey had more sense belonging to Europe than the young people from the member states of EU such as Netherlands and Sweden.

According to the study implemented with Turkish participants involved in the activities took place in Turkey between 2007-2013, the projects had a significant impact on increasing their self-confidence and personal development likewise in “YOUTH” Community Action Programme. Furthermore, the involvement of young people in YiA activities made them develop a tendency to implement their own projects or participate in similar projects in future. On the other hand, as the nature of YiA activities are focusing on the informal and non-formal learning rather than formal learning activities as like the other EU programs such as Erasmus or Comenius or Leonardo Da Vinci. The participants appreciated the usage of these methods which they believed that it fostered their involvement. In contrary to the findings in the interim evaluation report as referred above which included the all participants from different countries, in this report; the young people emphasized that they felt more European and they believed their European citizenship is fostered with their participation(RAY,2014).

Table 3.1.Number of volunteers involved in EVS between 2004-2011

	2004-2007	2017-2011
Sending	274	2056
Hosting	73	520

Resource : The International Volunteering Experiences of Youth and Its Socio-Cultural Impacts on Individual. (Çakı,2011,p.150)

According to the Table 6. (Çakı, 2011,p.150), It can be seen that Turkey is not a usual destination for volunteering and it is sending volunteers more than it is receiving. Furthermore, it is as well indicated within this study that the volunteers had prejudices prior to arriving Turkey with regards to religion and security though those prejudices changed positively after their participation to EVS in Turkey. It can be argued that; the reason behind receiving volunteers less than sending volunteers is more likely due to prejudices and the hosting organizations' lack of capacity or the provision of the support for the volunteers.

As Herrera(2011) stated that, nature of activities provided for the volunteers, the lack of responsibility put in the shoulders of the volunteers and the management structures within the hosting organizations hinder the involvement of volunteers and continues to be a challenge in the eyes of international volunteers. On the other hand, as she was volunteer herself in Turkey and implemented the study gives a perspective about another side of the coin. Although, in both studies (Çakı,2011; Herrera,2011) implemented at the same year, there is an indication of the security issue along with the image of Turkey in the eyes of the volunteers prior to arriving to Turkey. That commonality between two studies validates the fact that Turkey is not a usual destination for volunteering.

Contradictorily, Turkey is a sending country. As a sending country, the practice among Turkish organizations is sending the young people more than receiving them. It can be easily interpreted from the proportion of the young people with

fewer opportunities involved in EVS is higher than the young people from other participating countries (ECORYS, 2011b). Thus, it is probable that there is a tendency among Turkish organizations to send volunteers than receive them as they find it meaningful to involve young people with fewer opportunities to the EVS programmes more than receiving volunteers from Europe. This arguable fact is indicated as well by both organizations' representatives involved in this study that there is a high demand from Turkish youth to go abroad while there is lower demand from young people in abroad to come to Turkey.

According to the National Report on Erasmus+ Published in June 2017 (TR NA, 2017); Erasmus+ has a huge relevance within the Turkish context as it promotes the Acquis Communautaire under Chapter 26 Education and Culture. Furthermore, statistical data within the report illustrates that the program aims can be considered as achieved in Turkish context. Among the beneficiaries involved in the study, 64,3% of responders believed that the projects within Erasmus+ Youth enhanced the transnational understanding among youth. Correspondingly, 42,9% indicated that the projects enhanced the intercultural dialogue, social inclusion, solidarity and social harmony in the EU. On the other hand, 57 projects were focused on the young people with fewer opportunities although none of them were focused on the young people with economic difficulties in contrary to the report published under YiA. In Interim Evaluation report, it indicated that the majority of young people from Turkey considered themselves as economically disadvantaged (ECORYS, 2011b).

Another reason behind this issue might be that the simplified grant structure introduced by Erasmus+ which overwhelmingly reduced the workload of NA but the procedures concerning application, reporting and implementation still becomes a burden for most of the youth organizations. Although, it is indicated by the Youth organizations that the projects that they have implemented increased their institutional capacities due to outputs of the projects such as guidelines to increase the inclusion of young people with disabilities or the volunteer work and etc. (TR NA, 2017).

The lack of capacity of the organisations and inefficient monitoring mechanisms of NA was stated in several studies (TR NA,2017; ECORYS, 2011; Herrera,2011). The information provided in Erasmus+ Project Results Platform proves this statement. Even though, project name, amount of funding, name of the organizations involved and countries are indicated, the project summaries are not complete. Further, the project fiches neither provide the precise information about the projects such as outcomes, outputs, objectives nor the number of participants involved in the activities in several projects. Thus, I couldn't develop any framework or provide any meaningful quantitative or qualitative data to profundify the information concerning in South-East Turkey.

Table 3.2.Number of Participants Contracted for the Activities in Turkey

Years / Calls	Number of Participants Per sub-action			
	EVS	Youth Exchanges	Youth Workers	Total
2014	1270	8664	2520	12454
2015	1476	6761	1747	9984
2016	2007	3554	1910	7471
2017	1727	4910	1937	8574
2018	1590	6010	1815	9415
2018 Youth Mobility	-	6010	1815	7825
2018 Volunteering	1590	-	-	1590
2019 Youth Mobility	-	6542	1931	8473
2019 ESC Call	1901	-	-	1901

Resource : Erasmus+ Statistical Annexes (2014-2019)

Although, statistical data of the Erasmus+ and ESC from EACEA gives us a clear picture about the situation of Turkey concerning the mobilities as in Table. 7. The trend as “Turkey is an exporter of the volunteers rather than the importer” in YiA continued in Erasmus+ Programme. Even though, there was 1901 participants contracted within the projects applied to Turkish NA, in between 2018-2019, from Turkey; 694 volunteers involved in the activities abroad and Turkey hosted only 90

volunteers (19 of them as Turkish involved in in-country volunteering) comparing to the other countries. As it is indicated in Table.8 Number of participants involved in mobilities illustrate that between 2016 and 2017, Turkey hosted fewer people and sent more. It can be argued with variety of reasons such as security or cultural differences as it is always mentioned previously by the volunteers in the studies implemented.

Table 3.3.Number of participants involved in Mobilities

Years	Turkey as Hosting Country	Turkey as Sending Country
2014	8078	5030
2015	6684	5143
2016	5011	5810
2017	5756	6026
2018	7018	4209
2018-2019 ESC	71	675

Resource : Erasmus+ Statistical Annexes (2014-2019)

On the other hand, effect of Erasmus+ on the Turkish organizations is higher than the other countries and Turkey has similarity with the countries like former Communist Bloc due to variety of reasons such as economic difficulties. The majority of young people from Turkey and Bulgaria have never been abroad prior to their involvement to the youth projects. The other reason behind this situation might be the visa issue. As, Turkish participants need visa to participate in the activities taking place in European countries, this considered as obstacle in front of the participation (Genkova, et al., 2019).

Before explaining the context in South-East Turkey, the studies mentioned before generally focused on Turkish participants except the studies (Çakı,2011; Herrera,2011) implemented in 2011. The data gathering of Turkish NA and RAY Network focuses on the national participants rather than the incoming participants is the one of shortcomings of the literature with respect to Turkish context. Another issue concerning the provided literature is that the data gathered except than the

studies focused on specific action as volunteering (Brandenburg, 2017; Çakı,2011; Herrera,2011), the sampling of the studies is mixed with the participants of the other actions such as youth exchanges, mobility of youth workers.

Henceforth, as a practitioner and a researcher, I criticise that this approach might be sketchy and not produce results reflecting the reality due to divergent nature of the programs. In principle, youth exchanges, mobility of youth workers and EVS have different durations, different structures and even different incorporated methodologies. Furthermore, the literature provided by Turkish NA and RAY Network concerning the Turkish people focuses on the projects implemented in Turkey and the impact on the Turkish participants. Thus, the study with the incoming volunteers becomes more relevant to see that the previous studies are still valid or there are changes concerning the issues mentioned before.

3.1. Context of South-East Turkey

Turkey is currently hosting the highest population of refugees in the world, with a number of 3.6 million refugees (UNHCR, 2020). As of October 2020, Syrian refugee population under temporary protection is located respectively in Istanbul (512.578), Gaziantep (450.553), Hatay (434.401), Şanlıurfa (419.803) (DGMM, 2020). Concerning the population of the cities in the South-East Anatolia specifically Gaziantep and Şanlıurfa, one in 4 people in the street is a refugee from Syria. As only %1 of the refugee population in Turkey lives in the camps according to data provided by DGMM.

Huge urban population of refugees led the organizations to work with the refugee population or on cross-cutting issues such as social cohesion or access to disadvantaged. As the data gathered from Erasmus+ Project Results Platform concerning the project themes and the geographical distribution as; the following themes were mainly focused within the project took place in South-East Turkey specifically the Gaziantep, Mardin, Kilis, Şırnak, Siirt, Batman, Diyarbakır, Şanlıurfa, Adıyaman.

Table 3.4. Themes of the projects in South-East Turkey

Theme	First Theme	Second Theme	Third Theme
EU Citizenship, EU awareness and Democracy	29	29	28
Access for disadvantaged	27	27	20
Social dialogue	19	19	18
Youth (Participation, Youth Work, Youth Policy)	17	17	12
Inclusion - equity	11	11	7
Intercultural/intergenerational education and (lifelong) learning	10	10	9
Environment and climate change	8	5	5
Creativity and culture	7	7	5
Migrants' issues	5	5	5

Resource : Erasmus+ Project Results Platform

The most selected theme for the projects was EU Citizenship, Access for Disadvantaged, Social Dialogue and Youth as it can be seen in Table 3.4.. I have excluded the other themes selected less than five times. Accordingly, the volunteering projects funded in 2018 Volunteering Call on “Integration of Refugees” and “Access for Disadvantaged”. Due to lack of demographical data of participants or detailed information in project fiches in the Erasmus+ Project Results Platform, the demographics of the participants cannot be elaborated. Furthermore, non-existence of difference between Youth mobility and EVS in between 2014-2017, the distinction cannot be made about the projects whether it is mobility of youth workers, EVS or youth exchanges. Henceforth, it is not possible to provide a clear picture regarding selected topics and the activities.

The organizations from South-East Turkey involved in the 834 projects between 2014-2020 under Erasmus+ Programme. Among these projects, 166 projects were funded by Turkish NA and the organizations acted as coordinator organization and

received 4.052.720,29 EUR funding from the programme. Most funded organizations in the region was GEGED (910.008,89 EUR) with 24 different projects; SOF Dağı Youth and Sport Association (872.157,82 EUR) with 28 projects; GAP Gençlik Derneği (341.184,63 EUR) with 13 different projects. SOF Dağı Youth and Sport Association was previously accredited under Erasmus+ Programme currently it is not accredited and not receiving volunteers.

As of 2021 January; 15 organizations located in Mardin(1), Şanlıurfa(3), Adıyaman(3), Diyarbakır(1), Siirt(2), Kilis(1), Gaziantep(4) is holding Quality Label. Although, only five of these organizations are NGOs specifically youth grassroots and only two of them are currently receiving volunteers as GAP YA and GEGED (EYF,2021). Both organizations involved in this study, GAP Youth Association (GAP YA) and Gaziantep Education and Youth Association (GEGED) provide activities for the refugee populations and Turkish community in Gaziantep and Şanlıurfa as they are the only organizations in the region receiving volunteers currently.

3.2. Organizations involved in EVS/ESC in South-East Turkey

3.2.1. GAP Youth Association¹¹

GAP Youth Association was established in 2012 to provide training and mobility opportunities for the young people in GAP (Southeastern Anatolia Project) Region. The organization was set up initially to involve in Erasmus+/Youth in Action programs in 2012. It widened its scope after gaining experience in the field to the other cities within the region. In 2014, the organization received its EVS Accreditation as Sending, Coordinating and Hosting Organization. In 2017, It started to host its first volunteer and as of today, the organization hosted more than 20 volunteers in short and long-term activities taking place from 2 months to 12 months.

¹¹ Information is received from personal conversation from the representative of the organization in 25th October 2020.

After 2014, due to increased refugee population in Şanlıurfa, the organization started to provide activities for the refugee population to promote social cohesion. It also implemented education activities to increase the refugee population's access to the welfare system with the project called “*Empowering Refugees through Education-Social Rights for Equal Opportunities*”. During this project, they have provided legal counselling to 1200 refugees regarding education, employment, health, legal issues concerning the temporary protection measures.

Furthermore, they have cooperated with GIZ under Support to Refugees and Host Communities Program. During this project, they provided training and seed-funding opportunities to young people from both Syrian and Turkish communities. As a consequence of both projects, the organization developed a bridge between the Turkish and Syrian communities. The volunteering activities are implemented in the cooperated NGOs and the organizations’ information centre for the refugee and Turkish youth. Moreover, volunteers are providing activities varying from language courses to the activities with the refugee children.

3.2.2. Gaziantep Education and Youth Association¹²

Gaziantep Education and Youth Association (GEGED) is founded in Gaziantep in 2007 to provide mobility opportunities for young people within the European Youth Programmes. Since 2009, GEGED has been accredited as hosting, sending and coordinating organization under EVS. GEGED has engaged more than 2000 people to mobility projects within Erasmus+ Programme. Their working areas are active citizenship, democracy, non-formal education. Due to increased urban population of Syrian refugees in Gaziantep, the organization started to work with the Syrian refugee population.

¹² Information is received from personal conversation from the representative of the organization in 1st November 2020.

The organization cooperate with the local institutions such as schools, refugee support centres, non-formal education centres, a daily centre for orphans, sport places, hospitals to provide activities for the volunteers. The organization can host up to 24 volunteers within their organization at the same time and the volunteers are involved in following activities:

- Helping the organizations about daily issues, workshops and youth activities
- Involve in teaching activities and play activities with Syrian and Afghan Kids in refugee support centres
- Involve in teaching and play activities in the orphanage
- Implementing activities with children with leukaemia in Oncology Hospital Classroom
- Involve in English speaking clubs with Syrian and Turkish youth
- Benefit from Turkish and Arabic language classes provided by volunteers of GEGED
- Take role on the implementation of intercultural evenings
- Develop new ideas and workshops in the open spaces
- Involve in the environmental activities, planting trees and walks in nature

The volunteers are given opportunity to choose the activity concerning their expertise, their motivation or their knowledge. The organization staff mainly does the planning of the activities. The volunteers are expected to gain language skills and soft-skills to work with the refugee population, children and young people.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study aims to understand the volunteering process of the international volunteers involved in volunteering activities in South-East Turkey between 1st of January 2018 – the 1st of September 2020. The rationale of the research is the lack of recent studies implemented with the incoming volunteers to Turkey. Furthermore, the volunteering experiences in South-East Turkey are highly differentiated from the other volunteering experiences in Turkey because the organizations involved in volunteering in South-East Turkey have particular experience explicitly working with the refugee population. Duration of the time is chosen between 2018 to 2020 because both organizations have ongoing communication with the volunteers after their return and the volunteers' experiences were fresh. Some of those volunteers are involved in volunteering as EVS Volunteer and some as ESC Volunteer due to change between the programs.

The study tries to answer the questions such as “Who are the volunteers involved in ESC/EVS and how they decided to involve in EVS/ESC?”; “How were their experiences with the hosting organization, local community and other volunteers?” , “What do they gain and give from involving this particular EVS/ESC project in South-East Turkey?”, “What changes do happen in their life after involving the EVS/ESC project in South-East Turkey?”.

The study was implemented with 19 volunteers who have volunteered in GAP YA or GEGED between 1st - 20th of December 2020 using a semi-structured interview method by using the guiding questions in Annex-1 in English. During the interviews, Microsoft Teams were used to record and transcribe meetings than the transcripts of the interviews were corrected with the interviews' recordings. The duration of the interviews was between 40-90 minutes depending on the volunteers' answers. The transcripts were checked after the interviews and divided into the themes and sub-themes concerning the time frame of volunteers' experiences. Each volunteer were given a code with the organization name that they have involved

(GEGED/GAP), country (two letter ISO country code), current age of the volunteer (Age) and sex (f/m) as it can be seen in Table 4.1. List of Interviews.

Table 4.1. List of Interviews

ID	Code	Organization	Country	Gender	Age
1	GAP-MA-25-M	GAP	Morocco	M	25
2	GAP-BA-26-F	GAP	Bosnia and Herzegovina	F	26
3	GAP-MA-21-M	GAP	Morocco	M	21
4	GAP-MA-26-M	GAP	Morocco	M	26
5	GAP-HU-32-F	GAP	Hungary	F	32
6	GAP-ES-25-F	GAP	Spain	F	25
7	GAP-MA-22-F	GAP	Morocco	F	22
8	GAP-ES-30-F	GAP	Spain	F	30
9	GEGED-LT-28-F	GEGED	Lithuania	F	28
10	GEGED-PT-23-F	GEGED	Portugal	F	23
11	GEGED-IT-24-F	GEGED	Italy	F	24
12	GEGED-JO-30-F	GEGED	Jordan	F	30
13	GEGED-TN-22-M	GEGED	Tunisia	M	22
14	GEGED-IT-23-M	GEGED	Italy	M	23
15	GEGED-IT-23-F	GEGED	Italy	F	23
16	GEGED-PT-23-F-B	GEGED	Portugal	F	23
17	GEGED-TN-25-F	GEGED	Tunisia	F	25
18	GEGED-RO-20-F	GEGED	Romania	F	20
19	GEGED-ES-29-M	GEGED	Spain	M	29

Some of the volunteers' experience affected from Covid-19 pandemic. Due to Covid-19 pandemic, the projects were extended as the volunteers could not return to their home countries. Alternatively, the activities were cut-off before the volunteers' activities started. As a result, the organizations changed their activities into virtual during the stay of the volunteers and the impact of this situation is mentioned in detailed under “*Analysis*” Chapter.

Semi-structured interview method was used to increase the volunteers' involvement in the study and provide space to volunteers to explain themselves freely about their experiences. Before starting the interview, I explained the scope and methodology of the study. During the interviews, I told volunteers that their voice would be recorded and would be used anonymously with a given code. The volunteers were asked to fill out a post-interview survey (Annex-2) after the interview process is over to understand volunteer's profile (socio-economic background, educational background, etc.). After the interviews, I assigned the transcripts into the codes and divided the interview sections according to the themes.

Due to my personal experiences as volunteer, a coordinator of hosting and sending organization and mentor of the volunteers, I comment that the study has limitations concerning the language. Neither interviewees' nor the researcher's native language were English although, the interviews were conducted in English. It is arguable that it impacted the volunteers' expressions of feelings and thoughts as they might have not expressed themselves profoundly. However, it was remarkable that all volunteers engaged in the interview process could explain themselves fully. As the interviews were semi-structured, the volunteers were requested to express their opinions regardless of the topic or their views concerning the issues. Moreover, Most of the volunteers stated that there were volunteers in both organisations who could not speak English but communicate in Arabic or other languages. Henceforth, it can be said that the study excluded the young people with fewer opportunities falls into group with the educational difficulties due to language.

During the analysis, I have used the thematic analysis method. The process of thematic analysis focuses on relating the patterns within the qualitative data. Thematic analysis is not often associated with particular epistemological perspective and it provides flexibility for the researcher to conduct the analysis. The aim of the thematic analysis is to interpret data and making sense of it (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Clarke and Braun (2006) argue that a theme within thematic analysis should capture part of the data related to research questions and provide a

patterned response within the quantitative data. Moreover, these themes can be analysed in two ways as “*top-down*” way or “*bottom-up*” way and two different levels of themes as “*semantic*” or “*latent*” level.

Bottom-up approach is a process of data-driven analysis that needs to fit neither the researcher’s personal interest nor pre-existing codes as the data is collected specifically for the research and related to the questions answered by the participants. Concerning the level aspect of the thematic analysis, the semantic level refers to the process where the researcher only focuses on what has been said by the participants of the research with an attempt to theorize the patterns’ significance or the implications of these patterns by relating to the framework developed from the studies before. On the contrary, latent level thematic analysis exceeds the boundaries of semantic data but commences to define or analyse the assumptions or conceptualizations which are underlined within the semantic content of the data(Clarke&Braun, 2006).

Due to the specificity of each volunteering experience, the themes were developed as data-driven, though the main themes were identified as “before, during and after volunteering”. The answers of the volunteers’ constructed the sub-themes concerning each aspect. Further, the analysis was done with a semantic level approach as I wanted to focus more on the volunteers’ ideas and reflections of their experiences than how they have made these conceptualizations or assumptions through their experiences. Henceforth, it can be arguable as well that it is another shortcoming of the study.

5. ANALYSIS

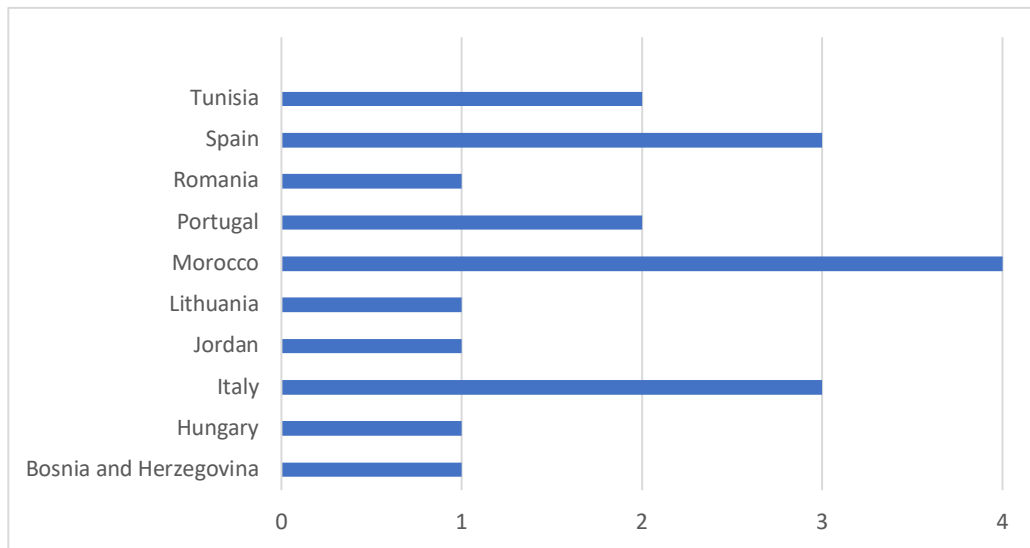
In this chapter, I have analysed the volunteers' general profile and their experiences before, during and after volunteering accordingly to the framework I have developed in previous chapters. Firstly, I will explain the demographics of the volunteer and the impact of the demographics on their engagement to volunteering. Secondly, I will discuss about their path to involve in international volunteering and how they define the volunteering from their perspective along with the roles of the organizations impacted their engagement. Afterwards, I will argue their activities, the impact of their work on themselves, local community and their relations with the local community and each other. In the last section, I will explain their experience after their involvement to international volunteering activity in GAP YA and GEGED.

5.2. General Overview of the Volunteers

As explained above, participating volunteering programs depends on the socio-demographics of the volunteer (education level, age, families income level, etc.), I find it crucial to frame the volunteers' profile before starting the analysis. This data was gathered with the post-interview survey after the competition of the interviews.

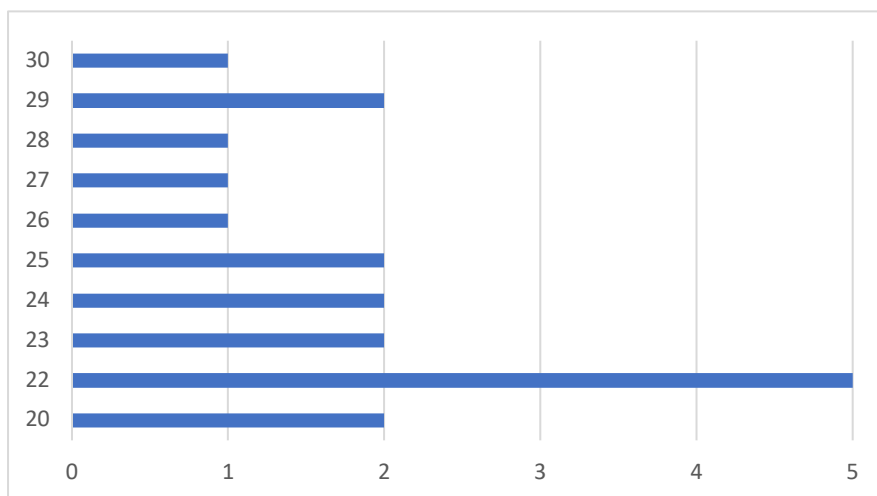
As the research sampling consisted of the volunteers involved in two different organizations, 8 of the volunteers were involved in GAP, 11 volunteers were involved from GEGED. The majority of the volunteers involved in GEGED were Italian due to GEGED's strong relationship with the Italian organization as the volunteers stated while the majority of the volunteers from GAP were from Morocco due to same reason.

Figure 5.1. Countries of the volunteers



The volunteers involved in the study were predominantly coming from European Union countries although, there were volunteers from South-Eastern Europe (Bosnia) and North African countries (Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia). The reason behind the involvement of these countries was due to the organizations' partnerships with certain countries. As mentioned further under Before Volunteering Chapter, most volunteers found the opportunity through their sending organizations or online channels but not directly contacting the hosting organization.

Figure 5.2. Age Distribution of the Volunteers



Although the program is open to volunteers between 17-30 years old, the volunteers interviewed were between 20-29 years old (average as 24) during the date of their volunteering period. Majority of the volunteers interviewed was 22 years old when they involved in volunteering. The oldest volunteer did her voluntary service in 2018 while 29 years old and youngest volunteer did her voluntary service in 2020 while she was 20 years old.

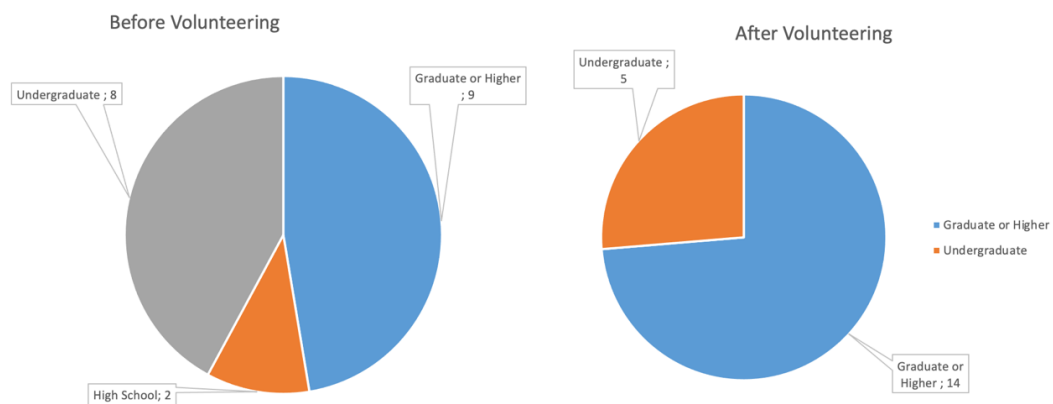
The gender distribution of the volunteers reflects the general EVS situation as it is indicated in the EVS Impact Study (Brandenburg, 2017) that majority of the volunteers have been female in both organizations. Among eight volunteers involved in GAP YA, five volunteers were female, and three volunteers were male. Among eleven volunteers involved in GEGED, eight volunteers were female, and three volunteers were male.

The volunteers involved in the study were participated EVS/ESC in between 2018-2020. In GEGED, there were volunteers participated to EVS in 2018, though I could not reach through the e-mails to these volunteers. For 2018, the only volunteer involved was from GAP YA from Hungary. In 2019, 12 volunteers (5 involved in GAP YA, 7 involved in GEGED) and in 2020, 6 volunteers (2 involved in GAP YA, 4 involved in GEGED) did their EVS/ESC.

Duration of the volunteering period varied from 2 months up to 10 months. Both organizations receive short-term volunteers (less than 2 months) in their projects more than the long-term volunteers (more than 2 months). 14 volunteers among 19 volunteers involved in the study did their EVS/ESC as short-term volunteer. Furthermore, only 2 volunteers did their EVS/ESC as long-term volunteers. According to a follow-up interview with the representatives of GAP YA and GEGED on 15th of January 2021, they professed that the long-term volunteers tend to drop-out more than the short-term volunteers due to duration spent in the organization. Thus, the organisations chose to host short-term volunteers more than the long-term volunteers to prevent dropouts and loses from funding due to drop-

outs. The Covid-19 pandemic affected the duration of the volunteering. The quantitative and qualitative data illustrate that the volunteers involved in 2020 after March extended their volunteering period up to 4 months due to suspension of the flights, and border closures because of sanitary measures of sending countries. Therefore, it should be indicated that the research mainly reflects the experiences of the short-term volunteers rather than the long-term volunteers involved in the projects.

Figure 5.3. Education Level of the Volunteers



As it is argued previously that the volunteers' involvement differs due to educational experiences (McBride & Lough, 2010). Majority of the volunteers have been studying or studied at university before their volunteering. This reflects the previous study done in 2017 as most EVS volunteers were either higher education graduates or higher education students (Brandenburg,2017). The volunteers used the EVS/ESC to spend time or fill the gap between their studies or reflect about their lives in another country for a short amount of time before studying further in a particular subject. The difference between the volunteers' involvement in education before and after the volunteering period proves this hypothesis. Furthermore, the reason behind the participation to volunteering in South-East Turkey was to try out the educational subject before involving in labour market as Italian volunteer who volunteered in GEGED states :

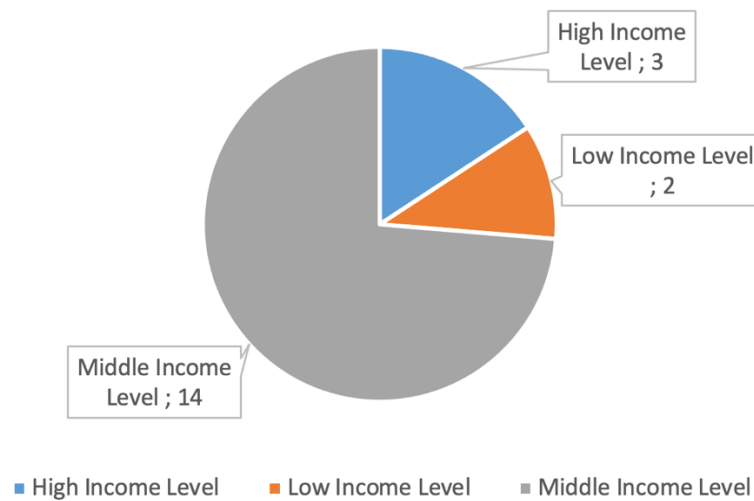
“Normally the Italians you see here. They have made all the same studies, International Relations, Development Studies or something very similar

and they all want to do the same job, and so they come here, including me.”

– GEGED-IT-M-23

This aspect is detailed in the “Before Volunteering” section though; I consider it to mention here as it is relevant concerning the education level of the volunteers and the reason behind the participation to EVS/ESC in South-East Turkey.

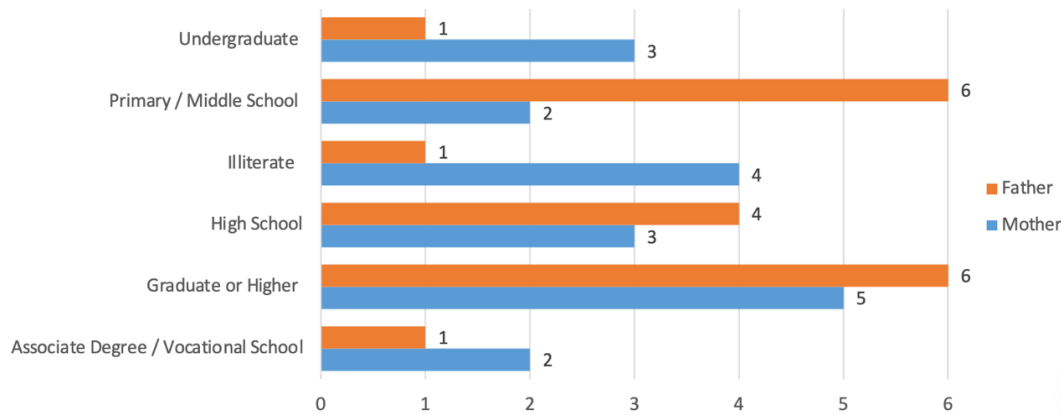
Figure 5.4. Income Level of the Volunteers



Another issue concerning the volunteers’ involvement has been household income or income level of the volunteer (McBride & Lough, 2010; Willems & Dury, 2017; Lee & Won, 2018). The individual tend to involve more when the volunteer or their family has more income and education level. In the post-interview survey, the volunteers were asked to indicate their income level with their own judgement according to income level of their country. As it can be seen in Figure.5.4, the volunteers are generally coming from the middle-income families proves the hypothesis that the volunteers' income level matters. It is worth to mention that only the volunteers coming from North African countries (2 from Morocco, 1 from Tunisia) declared more frequently than the others that they are coming from low-income backgrounds.

Another topic concerning the involvement of the volunteer is the parents’ education level. As Figure 5.5. illustrates most of the volunteers’ parent had at least primary school education.

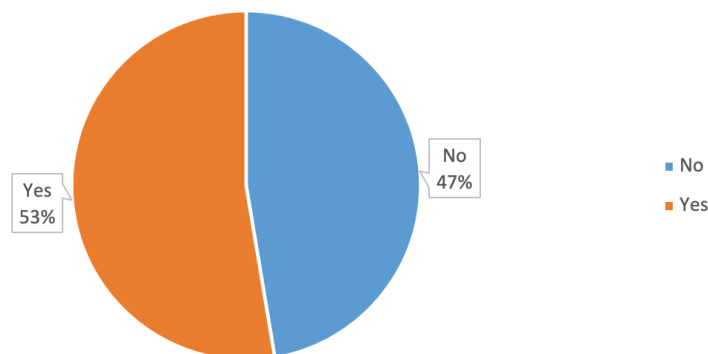
Figure 5.5. Education Level of Volunteers' Parents



Concerning the volunteers whose parents are illiterate, it might be said that their participation to EVS was facilitated due to their involvement in their sending organization prior to the international volunteering. As qualitative and quantitative data proves this case specifically in Moroccan and Tunisian volunteers' situation when their age and gender is correlated with the quantitative data and their reflections towards their sending organizations. Henceforth, their local volunteering impacted their involvement more than the education level of their parents. Furthermore, due to coming from low-income background, they have considered themselves as young people with fewer opportunities and the EVS/ESC position was provided by their sending organization rather than by themselves support this fact.

Figure 5.6. Volunteers' Consideration of themselves as Young People with Fewer Opportunities

Do you consider yourself as young people with fewer opportunities?



EVS/ESC aims to support young people with fewer opportunities and promotes their involvement to the projects. Thus, the volunteers were asked to answer the question in post-interview survey about themselves on being young people with fewer opportunities or not. Among 19 volunteers involved volunteering in GEGED and GAP, 11 of them declared that they see themselves as “*young people with fewer opportunities*”. This percentage is higher than general profile of the EVS participants according to the EVS Impact Study conducted in 2017 (Brandenburg, 2017).

5.3. Before Volunteering

The experiences prior to EVS/ESC, motivation behind the involvement and the perception towards volunteering differed from each other. Although, all of the volunteers agreed on the fact that motivation is the striving force to be volunteer and motivation is important than the skill. In this chapter, I explained the volunteers' journey from the first day of their decision to become volunteer to their participation to international volunteering accordingly to their motivation, their exposure to European Youth Programs or any other international activity in their countries or abroad and their previous local volunteering experiences.

5.2.1. Perception of volunteering among the volunteers

The volunteering is always an ambiguity term though; the volunteers defined the volunteering with giving to the community, being available, as a tool for learning and self-realization, and involvement to the community as active members. Moreover, volunteers defined volunteering as increasing the quality of the life of others or sharing and caring in other words, caring for another human being which reflects the solidarity aspect of the volunteering. Following statements interrelates with the international volunteering realities and aligns with the previously discussed aspects of international volunteering for international understanding.

“Volunteering is all about developing a community, anything related to the world. Because if you are developing a community or you are doing

voluntary work that will help people that means that you are volunteering.”- GEGED-TN-22-M

“Volunteering is like as they say in English. Sharing is caring so that is volunteering for me.”-GAP-MA-25-M

“For me, volunteering is, It is my responsibility but a natural one. I mean, I am part of the world, and at the same time I am responsible to give my best in order to increase the quality of life of another human being.” – GAP-ES-30-F

The statements can be interpreted as that the volunteers considered the volunteering in benefit of the community. Additionally, they have considered volunteering as beneficial for them not only for the community alike in the international volunteering activities for international understanding. Furthermore, they have considered volunteering as an opportunity to travel, to be abroad or feeling useful by being an individual that contributes to his/her community or international community.

“Volunteering is learning and being available while learning and being available for anything that is needed....”- GEGED-PT-23-F-B

“I think volunteering is basically taking time from your life and putting it in a project or something that you think it is worth it.” – GAP-ES-25-F

“I sometimes I think that it is in my blood to help people because that makes me feel good.”-GEGED-LT-28-F

“To volunteer is to help people, to know another culture or culture.”-GEGED-TN-25-F

“Volunteering as always is, you see the two parts. You are giving time on one hand and receiving on the other satisfaction, but also the skills you will then need for anything else in your future life.” – GEGED-IT-23-M

The volunteers' statements describe the volunteering as being involved in change by working towards an issue that is important for the community as active citizens. “EU strategy for Youth-Investing and Empowering” developed in 2009 (EU, 2009), continuously “Engaging, Connecting and Empowering young people : A new EU Youth Strategy in 2018” in 2018 (EU, 2018), the youth programs aim to promote the active citizenship of the young people and their volunteering. Thus, their involvement to volunteering, makes them become a striving power for change in the communities. The following statement of the Moroccan volunteer involved in GAP reflects that this aim is internalized by the volunteers.

“Volunteering actually is when you take the action you try to change something that you don't like it in your society or somewhere and you give your time your energy to be committed to make that action and to make that change that you want to make that happen.”-GAP-MA-22-F

One of the volunteers considered the volunteering as a horizontal relationship rather than top-down relationship between the beneficiaries and the volunteer. It can be interpreted as that the volunteer and the beneficiaries of the activities that the volunteer involves has an equal relationship. As it can be seen in the following statement, the volunteer compared to this relationship by differing volunteering from studentship.

“You know, I was a student, I am still a student, but I mean as a student you have much more individual perspective. When you volunteer is not just about the beneficiaries like the kids, the people you work with, but also the team working. It is for me. Volunteering is much about staying with people and being with them at least trying to be. And then I have to catch what they

need, and I do not see it as a super, like up to down relationship. For me it is more. Something equal, you know..... But for me, like both of us both, both sides were the same.” – GEGED-IT-23-F

In volunteering literature, international volunteering and volunteering in the local community generally differ due to their specific natures (Lough & Tiessen, 2018b; Haski-Leventhal, et al., 2008). In international volunteering, the volunteer engages with another culture, another community and this engagement process comes with cultural restraints and linguistic barriers. On the contrary, the volunteer directly involves in the community without those restraints in the local volunteering. Due to nature of the international volunteering, the volunteers tend to involve in the activities in another country and in generally different work environment or living conditions than their home. This is reflected in the statement of the Hungarian volunteer as she states “.... *It is much more exotic place than your normal work in your normal home.*”(*GAP-HU-32-F*). To understand the volunteers’ perception profoundly concerning the difference between international and local volunteering, the volunteers were asked to compare both experiences as local and international. Their answers different from finding local volunteering more meaningful and more providing for community to a safe environment comparing to international environment. Additionally, it is arguable that the local volunteering comparing to international is more society-oriented than the international volunteering activities as it is reflected in the following volunteers’ statements.

“It's much more altruism as a volunteering in local level because there you are with your ordinary life, you are dedicating your time and energy and so resources sometimes for your local community. So it's much more...the purely volunteering. Because you know that the international volunteering of course that you are traveling you so you are receiving something from this experience that you are going to another country, another culture..... In many cases it is a much more exotic place than your normal work in your normal home.” GAP-HU-32-F

“Well, first of all, when I arrived in Turkey, it was the culture shock because I was used here in Romania to help people that were speaking the same language as I was doing. They had the same hobbies, the same culture, and this was the first thing that hit me when I arrived there.” – GEGED-RO-20-F

I consider it worth mentioning that all volunteers answered the question *“Do you think which one is important to be volunteer? Motivation or Skill?”* question as motivation. As it is explained in *“Research Methodology”* section, I find it meaningful to ask this question to understand how the volunteers reflect the international volunteering and their considerations lean towards international volunteering for international understanding or international volunteering for development and humanitarian relief. When the EVS/ESC context is examined against international volunteering literature, EVS/ESC falls into into the category of *“international volunteering for international understanding”* rather than *“international volunteering for development and humanitarian relief”*. Henceforth, the volunteers’ involvement in EVS/ESC is participant-centred, and their involvement is focusing on their self-development rather than solely the benefit of the community that the volunteer involved. Regardless of sending country, the duration or the organization that the volunteer involved; motivation was the answer to this question. The reasons behind this answer was elaborated as follows :

“It's not necessary to have experience previous experience in the subject, so that is a no. The most important thing is your motivation and the capacity to learn. If you want, it's the most important.” – GAP-ES-30-F

“I think for me motivation is much more important because if you are motivated, you will do your best to learn new skills, to sharpen the skills that you already possess. But skills alone I think it's not enough. You might

be very skilled, but..... You couldn't succeed in the project if you lack motivation.” – GAP-MA-26-M

“I think I would say motivation because like many times you can have you can have skills, But if you're not motivated then you're not going to maybe give your best, but if you're motivated, even if you don't have skills, you will learn and I think learning it's also a process. “– GAP-ES-25-F

“Because I think that skills can be acquired in the field as well, so maybe it's if it's the first time that someone is doing volunteering. It's not the required to have particular skills, but it's important that the person is motivated and also because, well, it depends what kind of volunteering it is.” – GEGED-IT-24-F,

As it is reflected in the statements above, it is crystal clear that the motivation and eagerness to learn new skills are the predominant aspect of the volunteering. Although the skills are important during the volunteering processes, it is arguable that the volunteers see the volunteering process as a tool of learning for self-development to get necessary skills. Another distinction about the motivation vs. skill importance in international volunteering is that if the motivation is not there, the drop-out is generally inevitable (Willems & Dury, 2017). As in the following statement, the Jordanian volunteer’s experience proves this argument.

“Of course, the motivation is everything. As for me at the first week when we started the volunteering, I was a bit shock like I've never lived with that many people in the same place. You are with three girls in the same room, and for me it was so much, and if I didn't have a motivation, I would have left at the first week. Be honest.” – GEGED-JO-30-F

Ultimately, skill development and increased cultural awareness of the volunteer are crucial which argued in detailed under “*During Volunteering*” section. However,

it is necessary to analyse the volunteers' perception towards to difference of skill and motivation as a criteria to involve in EVS/ESC as it falls into "*international volunteering for international understanding*". The following statement of the volunteer involved in EVS in GAP than involved in EUAid Volunteers Programs which falls into "*international volunteering for development and humanitarian aid*" in El Salvador reflects this difference between the EUAid Volunteers and EVS/ESC:

"Well, it's pretty different than European Voluntary Service where your responsibilities are very limited. You can also do very few things, which is great, I mean, it's positive, but the same time, the kind of the responsibilities, maybe if not. I don't know according to my experience. let's say that European Solidarity Corps is like more personal experience and the other one (EUAid Volunteers) is a professional. EVS is an entrance. Taking into account that the fact that if a person is able to live in another country and performance different environment show that that person is cool, able adapt to different context, and that is very positive. So in general terms, also is a good chance for you, but the other one is a direct jump to the film, yeah." – GAP-ES-30-F

On the other hand, some volunteering opportunities requires particular skill or qualification to involve as it is usually focused on context of humanitarian emergencies while like the other volunteering opportunities for specifically the young people do not require such skills. As Italian volunteer elaborates this aspect from his point of view by comparing to involve in a volunteering program as health professional and involve in a volunteering program as a young person.

"Especially hard skills, hard skills can never be required, at least with you as volunteer. Something else is like when you go like a doctor volunteer. Of course you have to be a doctor, but at least when we talk about civic

service¹³, European Solidarity Corps, former EVS and all these other youth volunteering programs, it is never required to have hard skills so professional skills about the soft skills.”- GEGED-IT-23-F

To summarise, it can be argued that EVS/ESC is merely for the volunteers' self-development but not necessarily for them to practice skills that they have learnt during their studies concerning the activities in GAP and GEGED. In another aspect, the volunteers' reason for involvement and motivation is to see and adapt and evaluate their choice of studies remains the one of the primary reasons for participating EVS/ESC.

5.2.2. Relationship with the sending organization before volunteering

The sending organizations play particular role concerning the quality of the program as well as the involvement of the volunteer. As it is previously mentioned that the role of the sending organization is to prepare and assist the volunteers prior to their participation. For instance, the quantitative and descriptive data from the experiences of the volunteers involved in the study are correlated, it might be said that the participation of young people with fewer opportunities depends more on their communication with sending organization than any other factor. To illustrate that, the opportunity to volunteer abroad was presented for the young people with fewer opportunities by the sending organizations. The reason behind that they cannot reach the opportunities as easy as the individuals who are well-informed, multilingual, or involved in NGOs or civil society organizations. Concerning the volunteers' participation and process of finding the volunteering position is illustrated in following statements.

“Actually I didn't know they exist, but through Facebook I saw a post and I texted the girl. We met like few times and she told me about everything. I

¹³ Volunteer refers to the Italian Civic Service “Servizio Civile”.

told her that I already have experience teaching kids as a volunteer with the local NGOs in Jordan.” – GEGED-JO-30-F

“I didn't know anything I just knew that my friend went with them to Sinop one year before. That's why I knew how I knew that organization, but I didn't have any contact with them before going to this project.” – GAP-BA-26-F

“It was social media Facebook post. I have like my network on Facebook like all people, So I saw a friend of mine on Facebook shared this opportunity like they were looking for female volunteers to go to Turkey. So I saw than I applied and then I get selected.”-GAP-MA-22-F

“Actually I joined the Facebook group. It's like a short term EVS projects. I think it's called like this and [GEGED_Staff]. He's posting there constantly and I saw that one. And I was like, Well, it looks very similar with what I've done already. It's looks nice and I've wrote to him. I think first and he said. Yeah, and then he put me together in with the sending institution. I mean I did not have a sending institution of my own.”-GEGED-LT-28-F

The process of finding the opportunity and communicating with the sending organization varied with the volunteer's previous experiences. The statements above describe that some of the volunteers were neither involved in sending organization nor had communication before their ESC/EVS activity. Among 19 volunteers, only five volunteers were involved in their sending organizations as local volunteer or engaged with them prior to their volunteering. The rest of the volunteers had local volunteering activities although, the organizations that they involved were not their sending organizations. Some of the volunteers directly offered by their sending organization to involve in the opportunity as they have never been abroad. This situation indicates that the volunteers' involvement depends on their networks in their home countries or their knowledge concerning the program. For the majority of the volunteers who haven't been in abroad and

who considered themselves as young people with fewer opportunities that was the general case.

“I didn't know like there was programs but then I was offered. It was like there is a program in Turkey. I said OK tell me about it and once I knew about it was like just come to me and I like it and I wanted to go.” – GAP-MA-21-M

“No, in [representative of the organization] said to me. I told him I'm very excited to visit another country and discover another opportunity in other country. He said, there is opportunity in Gaziantep, in Turkey. I said, OK, I want to go.” - GEGED-TN-25-F

Even though European Youth Portal was the place to promote the volunteering opportunities for the hosting and sending organizations, the volunteers mainly used their informal or formal channels to find the volunteering position. They received the information about the project, activities and the financial issues concerning the volunteering opportunity directly from the sending organization or the hosting organization prior to their departure.

Concerning the support from the sending organization to the volunteers, the majority of the volunteers received this support through online channels such as e-mails or social media; or they have received the information from the website of the sending organization.

“I think they explained to me the whole process before going to Turkey. Like the whole preparation phase, like whenever I have a question they answered all my questions.” – GAP-MA-26-M

“I just talked to the organizations both GEGED and also the one from Romania, the one that sent me there and they basically explain to me

everything so did not't have a lot of questions because everything was clear since the beginning and I also read all the articles relevant from the Erasmus page, so I knew exactly how it was going to be..... I had something to ask, they were there to answer me.” – GEGED-RO-20-F

In this context, it can be said that the existence of the information channels such as National Agencies, SALTO and European Youth Portal helped the volunteers gather the information and learn about the program's structure. These information channels' existence is essential to make the volunteers well informed about the host organisations' activities or the practicalities concerning the program. Additionally, as Italian volunteers' statement shows us that the project description in the information packages or website are important for the volunteers to increase their expectations in other words not to overestimate or underestimate the activities within the organization before their participation.

“About also the other volunteers that will tell you the exact same thing. I think that reading the description of the project that is published by [sending organization], you get too high expectation on what you will do in Turkey. Also, because you know, ask Europeans and especially those like me and like basically all the others, at least Italians, especially Italians. That are here are normally youngsters who are interested in working international cooperation afterwards. and a project like this where it is written that you will go there to support the Syrian community, you have the expectation to go there and support the Syrian community you know and so it really creates a very hope They actually really want to see the Syrian people and to do something for them. And that's not exactly what happened in GEGED, at least in our case..”-GEGED-IT-23-M

The information provided at the website of sending organization or hosting organization has to inform explicitly the volunteers but not increase their expectation. If it does so, the volunteer comes with high expectations which leads

to drop-out as the volunteers develop a tendency that their expectations would never be fulfilled or involve in the activities which was promised to be in the program in a fully and motivated manner. Moreover, the sending organizations are mainly as a bridge between the next, current and previous volunteers who have experienced and gone through the same challenges or obstacles. Thus, the sending organizations role generally is to make the volunteers acquainted with the next volunteers who will be involving the organisation's activities.

“I was very worried and ... then my sending organization gave me the contact of some volunteers that were there so I could speak with them and ask them about security and everything I needed. So I spoke with the volunteers.” – GEGED-PT-23-F-B

In this regard, the volunteers' statement proves that this role is achieved up to an extend to increase the quality of the volunteers' experience and make them aware about the issues previously to their deployment. In the particular case of Portuguese volunteer, it became a tool to receive the information from the volunteers going through the same experience. It can be said that this impacted on the involvement of the volunteer and increased her sense of security. As it is indicated in the studies concerning Turkey (Herrera,2011; Çakı,2011), the security issue has been always the hindering factor for the volunteers to participate in the activities in Turkey. This factor has been stated predominantlly by the volunteers involved in GEGED and GAP YA.

“They were yeah, they were super, always available. My sending organization is in Bologna. And we had a training of one day with the other long-terms. ... it was nice because three of us got to know each other that day. So then when we met in the airport we already know each other a bit.”- GEGED-IT-23-F

The promoted practice within EVS/ESC is usually having a face-to-face communication and providing training to the volunteers before their deployment. During that training activities, the volunteers generally meet the other previous volunteers involved in the same organization or other organizations from the same country to discuss the experiences. In this regard, the experience of the Italian volunteer among the other volunteers, the sending organization's practice was the most meaningful one which increased the quality of the project and make the volunteer well-informed about the opportunity, the hosting organization and cultural issues that might arise during the stay of the volunteer. It can be said that this practice prevented drop out and made her more devoted as she had stayed in the organization as long-term.

To summarise, the cooperation between the sending and hosting organizations (GAP YA /GEGED) has been longstanding as they have been working with the same sending organizations for two years. The number of the volunteers from particular countries such as Morocco (for GAP YA) and Italy (for GEGED) confirms that the cooperation has been fruitful for both sending and hosting organizations. Even though, the volunteers had low communication with their sending organizations, there has not been any negative indication from the volunteers concerning the sending organizations during the interviews. However, as it is elaborated previously in "*International Volunteering*" section, the reason behind it, arguably can be the low level of communication between the volunteer and the sending organization in comparison to hosting organization(Dekker & Halman, 2003).

5.2.3. Volunteering experiences of the volunteers prior to EVS/ESC activities

Majority of the volunteers involved in local volunteering activities varying from the research or helping to poor in their own countries. Furthermore, some of the volunteers were involved in the volunteering activities concerning the refugees and political issues and according to the volunteers' answers. It can be argued that their involvement with refugee populations prior to their participation to volunteering,

was one of the main reasons for the volunteers to involve in the volunteering activities in South-East Turkey.

“I had a volunteering experience in different kind of fields. I was sometimes doing volunteering more like within offices, not just with the people, but also like helping on executing projects and development projects. And I had to also experience in the student movement as a volunteer because I was since I started in University. I was part of the student movement.” – GAP-ES-25-F

“Well, I have volunteering in many local organizations like. Getting food for the ones who needed, Teaching English in like in an Association who teaches English to older people. It's called the Senior University. And while yeah, while I was in school, I did that for a year also I gave like explanations on the subjects to school kids. I signed up and I was teaching them, philosophy, Portuguese.” – GEGED-PT-23-F-B

The local volunteering experiences of the volunteers above were generally happened mainly during their studies and the volunteers wanted to involve in these activities to evaluate their free-time in a meaningful way. Although the volunteers from Morocco and Tunisia have been involved in their sending organization and these volunteering opportunities were varied. As they have elaborate as giving to the society, having a connection with the community, increasing the quality of the others' lives. Additionally, one of the volunteers have worked as a mentor for the EVS volunteers within her organization.

“We were doing many projects, especially during international days. For example blood donations. We do campaigns, we go to elementary school in villages and we collect donation in order to reconstruct or paint the schools and make them more adequate for people” – GAP-MA-26-M

“First I was I student at high school so I was doing just voluntary on a weekly basis. Not much of my time was dedicated for it and I was doing it just in the town or in the city. But with [sending organization], I volunteer them or do it like in more than one city at the same time We could volunteer to organize events to organize campaigns, funding campaigns, etc. Like the last one I was engaged in was up a funding campaign to collect money for families who were affected by COVID-19 situation. So we have volunteer to start a campaign that lasted for a month and a half and half collected more than.”-GAP-MA-21-M

“Tunisian Association that I involved, I meet with the volunteers there from different countries like Italia, Turkey This year is also Poland. I'm a local volunteer. I help the volunteers to discover places. We do together activities like Conversation Club, to visit farms and like this.” – GEGED-TN-25-F

Furthermore, some of the volunteers had previous experiences with the refugee/migrant population. These experiences took place in their countries or abroad where they have engaged with different organizations. Thus, it can be argued that their previous experiences with refugee population helped them to involve in the activities in GEGED during their EVS/ESC.

“I did it actually in Sicily for the migrants as well from Africa. And actually, even here now I mean, OK, it's United States. You know it's a new country. Everything is new for me and it takes forever to get all the paperwork done. So I have a job right now. But I joined the volunteering again. I'm also teaching English some they call it new Americans. So basically the immigrants from Africa or from Ukraine....” – GEGED-LT-28-F

“I just like to do volunteering with refugees. I already had a volunteering experience, but it was local volunteer in Jordan with IOM.”-GEGED-JO-30-F

Additionally, the volunteers' local volunteering experiences differed. One volunteer involved in research activity, while other was involved in student movement. Two volunteers' experiences dissent from the other ones as they have started to volunteer in their local community in relatively early ages such as 13 to 16 prior to EVS/ESC. The reason behind that might be said as their involvement to the civil society and their perspective towards the volunteering.

"It's very different because what I'm doing in Barcelona is basically research, so it's a small NGO that publishes report on the military industry and it's just basically doing research and advocacy."— GEGED-ES-29-M

"First of all, I start to be a volunteer when I was 13 years old in the Red Cross, I was very young but in a way I felt like compelled to do this kind of service for different humans."-GAP-ES-30-F

"I've been running my very first social like projects with [sending organization] and but currently so I have experience of almost like six years of volunteering."-GAP-MA-22-F

According to the data, it can be argued that these experiences impacted the participation of the volunteers to EVS/ESC specifically due to their tendency to help others or their perception towards volunteering. Arguably, it might be the one of the reasons behind their involvement in both organizations. As their experiences are varied and mostly were with the disadvantaged population, it can be said that these volunteering experiences made them ready to involve in the activities in GAP YA/GEGED.

5.2.4. Exposure of volunteers to Host Country as Turkey and Youth Programs

The exposure of the volunteers to the host country or youth programs are the impact factors on their participation as volunteer. In regards to that, none of the volunteers were in the South-East part of Turkey before their volunteering in GAP YA or GEGED. However, they were in Turkey or exposed to Turkish culture due to their studies or personal relations previously. Their prior exposure was one of the main motivations for some of the volunteers to involve in the volunteering activity specifically in Turkey.

“Well, by that time I did not know that much about any of the cities because before going to Urfa, I was just in Turkey once and it was in Fethiye, yeah, so it is like completely different.”-GAP-ES-25-F

“Yes, I visit the Turkey many times, like 10-15 times before, but I only visited Istanbul. I didn't go anywhere else.” – GAP-BA-26-F

South-East part of Turkey was utterly different from their experiences in Turkey for the volunteers whose experiences were solely involving tourism. As the Bosnian volunteer's statement (GAP-BA-26-F) confirms that, she felt the cultural difference and had a cultural shock even though she has been involved in Turkey previously as it is elaborated in detailed under *“During the volunteering”* section. Some of volunteers were in Turkey because of Erasmus+ Programs or the programs of the different NGOs such as AISEC¹⁴ or governmental institutions such as or Yunus Emre Institute¹⁵.

Yes, I've been in Turkey twice. Yes, I went the first time was for a volunteering project with AISEC.-GEGED-TN-22-M

¹⁴ AISEC : <https://aiesec.org>

¹⁵ Yunus Emre Institute : <https://www.yee.org.tr>

“I was in Turkey before like not for such a long period. I was in Turkey for like some weeks. I had seen Kapadokya an Istanbul and also two cities on the Black Sea. In Bursa, I was having a Turkish language summer school. I mean the you know Yunus Emre Institute. Three years ago, more or less, and yet the others were just Holidays, so nothing special. “- GEGED-IT-23-F

“And I came to Turkey with this[Erasmus+ youth exchange]. Like with many projects.”-GAP-HU-32-F

“I think like 6 times maybe. Yeah, 2 two of them [youth projects] in Turkey. Of them were in Turkey, the others were in other places.”- GEGED-PT-23-F

As the statements of the volunteer can be interpreted that their experience in Turkey did not have had remarkable impact on their involvement though they gained an idea about the Turkish culture during their holidays. The Italian volunteers' experience (GEGED-IT-23-F) was the most evident one that she were studying Turkish and Arabic; thus she wanted to involve in any volunteering opportunity in Turkey to gain practical skills. This experience among other shows the fact that her involvement to voluntary service, specifically in Turkey was derived from her previous engagement with Turkish culture in different contexts. As it is considered both in EVS/ESC and international volunteering literature (Şenyuva & Nicodemi, 2017; Holdsworth, 2010), the career choices influence on the volunteers' involvement in the international volunteering. Even though, the volunteers who had involved in Erasmus+ projects or AISEC had different experiences; they lived in the community that was slightly different in their perspective than the community in Şanlıurfa or Gaziantep.

Furthermore, the volunteers' exposure to other European Youth Programs might help them to gain knowledge and receive information about the volunteering

opportunities in Europe while creating cultural awareness as they engage with international environment. Therefore, it can be argued that the volunteers' previous experiences increase their social capital in other words, social networks. Henceforth, it can be said that how they found out the opportunities is associated with their involvement to program. As Hungarian volunteer involved in GAP (GAP-HU-32-F) was previously involved in several projects in Europe and became aware about the opportunities due to her involvement. Additionally, the volunteer involved in GEGED from Portugal (GEGED-PT-23-F) became aware of the European Union projects throughout those channels alike in the case of Hungarian volunteer. On the other hand, all volunteers coming from North African countries were involved in international programs which widen their horizons to go abroad as the following statement of the volunteer from Morocco involved in PeaceCorps program of State Department of U.S. validates this fact.

“I got my full-time job with the Peace Corps and I was doing trainings for the American volunteers who came here to serve in Morocco and that was what inspired me to try to volunteer abroad as I saw how the American volunteers here in Morocco.” – GAP-MA-26-M

Ultimately, alike the previous volunteering experiences, the exposure of the volunteers to host country and international programs but not only the European Youth Programs increased their participation to EVS/ESC and involvement as their statements confirm this finding. Additionally, it is indicated in following chapter, the personal attachment developed during their exposure to Turkey and it can be said that it impacted their participation to EVS/ESC.

5.2.5. Motivation to involve in EVS/ESC

The volunteers' motivation differs from having experience abroad, having a meaningful time, working with the refugee population, increasing their language skills, to be living in a different cultural surrounding or in contrast being in a similar cultural surrounding or personal attachment with Turkey as a host country.

Additionally, it can be said that the organisations' activities and the experience of the previous volunteers impacted the volunteers' motivation. As the statements of the volunteer indicate that the volunteers' general motivation was to be involved in the migration field or have experience in the field before considering to work in the field of migration. It can be argued that the volunteers involved in the studies concerning international relations, EU studies, migration or law tend to be involved in the organizations in South-East Turkey. The statements of the volunteers concerning their study areas and their motivation to involve become interrelated in this regard as the following answers of the volunteers concerning their motivations confirms this argument.

“So my main motivation was because I wanted to approach to the migration field so to get closer to it. I already did some academic. But I never experienced something practical in the field and I wanted to see like closely how it worked and how was the system...” – GEGED-IT-24-F

“I was always really interested in the migration crisis that was happening all over the Mediterranean. Because it's a phenomenon that is happening in many countries, happening in countries that are part of Europe but also some other countries that are not part of Europe. I've been always aware of what was happening. For example, in Syria and in some of the countries in the Middle East. So that was also a reason for me to go there because I wanted to somehow see what was happening in there and like to somehow see what was the reality. I was also already like I did an internship when I was finishing my studies with an NGO in Spain that was working with refugees and migrants. So that was another reason to go there because it was like something that it was already close to my heart. And I fell by the time that I could learn more about the situation of the population going there. – GAP-ES-25-F

Besides the relation with the studies or previous work experiences, the volunteers' choice of Turkey or South-East Turkey was not motivated through the migration or the refugee crisis in general. As one of the volunteer states that pure motivation of the volunteer was to travel, or the place was exotic or it was the only opportunity for the volunteer to involve in the EVS/ESC to go abroad. The following statements illustrate this argument.

“To be fair, my only reason was having a free time and wanted to travel in somewhere else.” – GAP-BA-26-F

“I think because for us for Europeans it's very exotic, ..., very Oriental, and we love it.” – GAP-HU-32-F

“My purpose after Peace Corps was just to volunteer anywhere abroad and the first opportunity that came to me was Turkey.” – GAP-MA-26-M

The volunteer from Jordan involved in GEGED declared that there were not numerous opportunities for Jordanians to participate. When she saw the opportunity, it was only option for her to participate. Thus, the motivation was simply to involve in volunteering abroad regardless the activity of the organization or the country. Likewise, the majority of volunteers were involved in GEGED or GAP to evaluate their free time or try something new.

“Actually there are few EVS programs that Jordanian can participate..... It was Turkey and Turkey is a visa free for Jordanian, so it's easier for me to go to Turkey rather than Europe.” – GEGED-JO-30-F

Another aspect concerning the volunteers' motivation is that both organizations provide volunteers a space to try out their new ideas while working with refugees. Both hosting organizations do not have structured involvement mechanisms for the volunteers as both organizations are grassroots organizations rather than huge

humanitarian aid organizations. Due to that, their relations with the community that they work is mainly at the individual level rather than institutional level in comparison to humanitarian aid INGOs providing services in the region. Thus, the following statement of the volunteer from Spain is confirming this fact and indicates her reasoning behind involving in GAP as volunteer.

“... I am very interested in in this area of the world. It's a challenge area. There's a lot of things to do there. Also, the project there, I mean itself was interesting because it's a local project who gives you the possibility to explore the local community in a very authentic way. It's not like working on humanitarian agency or an international NGO is different because in that way you are able to to be with people in there in a very close way. So I thought it was opportunity for me not only to discover the area also the challenge...– GAP-ES-30-F

Correspondingly, the refugee crisis was the most visible one among the other reasons to involve for the volunteers. One of the reasons for the volunteers to participate in the activities of both organizations were that the organizations are directly implementing activities with refugees. The volunteers had a tendency that their involvement in EVS/ESC in South-East Turkey will provide them a space to get out of their comfort zone, understand the refugee crisis with more-hands on experience and challenge themselves by being in this particular part of Turkey.

“... first of all, when I read the description of the organization and the main activities, it was very appealing. And it was also a challenge to do something, let's say harder than everything that I've done before, because now we were talking about an international environment, not just the local one. And I think this was the main reason why I chose to go there because. Uh, I was very enthusiastic to meet new people and people from all around the world, but at the same time I really wanted to make at least a small change in that part of Turkey because it's not a usual destination. Let's say

usually people choose to go to Europe and a few countries, but not many people are talking about Turkey and especially. That side of it and I'm talking here about Gaziantep. I never heard about Gaziantep until before this project to be honest.”– GEGED-RO-20-F

Conversely, the motivation of two volunteers were the cultural and religious similarity between Turkey and the country of the volunteer. The volunteer had a perception that the cultural differences between Morocco and Turkey are lesser than the cultural difference between Morocco and the countries from Europe.

“..... also our culture are similar. And I talked myself that I'm gonna be more comfortable with Turkey than another country like if I went to another country it's gonna be like a cultural shock and I won't know what to do. But for Turkey was OK for me. There are people that I can find that like they are they have like traditions like as the Arabs. And also the majority of the country are Muslims and I can find mosque where I can pray and the people there are nice and also I meet other people, they are Syrian who live in Urfa and they were so nice with us and I will remember that experience for the whole my life for sure..”-GAP-MA-25-M

Henceforth, the volunteers' motivation differs with their educational background, cultural restraints of his/her own country and their tendency to take responsibility and awareness about the problems concerning themselves and Europe such as refugee crisis. Furthermore, it can be argued that the volunteers who has a career goal to work in development or humanitarian aid tend to involve in the region more than the other volunteers. This is generally visible in the motivations of the volunteers coming from Italy, Portugal and Spain comparing to the volunteers coming from other European or North-African countries. On the other hand, the cultural similarity was one of the factors for the volunteers to involve in volunteering in Turkey for the volunteers from North-African countries. As previously explained the exposure to Turkey or having studies concerning the

Turkish language were other reasons behind involving in the EVS/ESC volunteering in South-East Turkey from the perspective of the volunteers.

5.2.6. Volunteers perception about European Youth Programs and EVS/ESC

The volunteers' perception of the EU Youth Programs was mainly positive. They have seen the opportunity as an enriching experience for themselves and the funding mechanisms as a useful instrument to provide opportunities for young people for their self-development. In addition to that, the program's structure is considered facilitative for the participation of the young people due to financial aspects, the mechanisms of support within the program. The following statements of the volunteers illustrate their understanding and perception concerning the European Youth Programs.

“Well, I think it's one of the best initiatives that in place now even with this context of the pandemic. It is one of the most changing experience that I had in in my life and every time. . . They should read about this because it really helps people and especially young people and it can basically change your life. For me it was like this. I think even the way it is, the way it works is a very good one. Everything is clear since the beginning. Everything is funded and you don't have to worry about food or shelter or things like this. So basically you just go there. You just need some initiative. You need to have some wish to do things and you can find a lot of opportunities.” – GEGED-RO-20-F

“I think it's amazing program.... because first you can learn you can learn so much and also you can meet a lot of people from all around Europe and I really met amazing people. It's so it was so like I was opening for me to meet so much young people that are working so much all around the world”-GAP-BA-26-F

“I think it's a good initiative for young people in European countries as well as partner countries. It gives the students and young graduates the opportunity to sharpen their skills to explore other cultures, to expand their network. I think it's a good initiative. I like it very much and I hope they continue what they're doing.”-GAP-MA-26-M

It might be said that the volunteers defined the program as an empowering for themselves. Furthermore, the volunteers' answers towards the EU programs have been intersecting with the program's approach as “*participant-centred*” rather than “*society centred*”. In addition to that, the volunteers' experiences, specifically from North African countries, were divergent. The volunteers from North African countries stated that they do not have enough opportunities to participate in the activities in Europe. Due to budget restrictions put in place concerning the North African, Eastern Partnership or Balkan countries; it is evident that the North African volunteers to involve the program is harder than the young people coming from European countries. The statements confirm this fact from the understanding of the North African countries towards EVS/ESC. Although the program as it is stated in the 1996 document, developed to promote cooperation between the European Community and third countries (EEC, 1998), it might be said that there are setbacks on the participation of young people from third countries due to budget restrictions. The volunteers from Morocco criticize the program considering North-Africa as a receiving country rather than a sending country.

“Actually, I can say yes and no because I can say yes, because most of the time you can find a lot of opportunities like EVS in Europe, but most of the time also, they're looking for European volunteers, so that's why I can say that there is no much opportunities for me as Tunisian I can't say no because when I search much. I can find a few opportunities that can accept the Tunisians and all other volunteers from all over the world, so I cannot say one answer.”-GEGED-TN-22-M

“I think it's a great like it was a very nice experience for me to be introduced to new cultures. Also meeting new people from different cultures and this opportunity like for the Middle Eastern is not like everyday opportunity you only find it like one in a million times.” – GEGED-JO-30-F

“I think it's really EVS is something really great. Um, but I don't know if it's for because in my country it's not really famous. I see like a lot of European countries were participated like Spain, Italy, France, but we don't really see volunteers from Africa like. but actually there is not too much opportunities for the people from North Africa.” - GAP-MA-F-22

Despite the critique concerning the North African volunteers' participation to program, the general perception of the volunteers aligns with the program aims. It can be argued that the EVS/ESC or Erasmus+ aims such as; to increase the cultural awareness, to foster mutual understanding and to promote the solidarity and tolerance are covered by the involvement of the volunteers. It can be seen in the statement of the volunteers particularly concerning the cultural awareness as following :

“Maybe it can sound too optimistic, but for sure some people that came to Turkey and didn't know much about Turkey. They got back home knowing more and having less prejudices. So like maybe little by little we can....We can Have a more aware society in general.” GEGED-IT-23-F

“It's very good. And I think it's an amazing way to for the young people and not only young people, but mostly young people to meet other cultures and to well to open their minds and help them to find what they like to do and have different experiences”. – GEGED-PT-23-F

In addition to that, even North Africans' involvement is low. The Moroccan volunteers' statement below shows that the volunteers' experiences create a sense of solidarity and promote the EU values among them with their participation.

“I think they're really nice because first you bring youth from outside Europe, you give them an experience to live and to see. For example, the values of Union because you know European Union and also it's a program is under their supervision, which means that you're learning some values of solidarity. I was a teacher of English with the Syrian refugees and also with the adults in Turkey. So I knew what is it to give from my time, from my knowledge to others and also to help as much as I can. So those are the core values that the solidarity....”-GEGED-MA-21-M

Furthermore, to understand the volunteers' perception towards EU and the other programs implemented by European Union, Italian volunteer involved in different programs states that the programs not only EVS/ESC but Erasmus+ and European Union Programs provides different job and study opportunities for the individuals abroad rather than their own countries. As it can be seen that, these programs created an impact on the European citizenship of the young person from the experience of the volunteer as following :

“Well in my case I found them super. It's a great opportunity because thanks to that I could do my Erasmus during my Bachelor. Now I'm doing an European master that is financed by the European Union so like thanks to that I can do my studies and then also I believe it's a great opportunity also because for those people that cannot afford to do those kind of experience, so thanks to your European funds, we first of all we can travel. It's not for every time for free, but we are covered for a large part and also it's a way; original and different way to explore the rest of Europe. But also like outside Europe as Turkey for instance, and also to encounter other nationalities. Other people from all over the world that otherwise would be

very difficult to meet in another situation so. I feel like when I participate in in those experiences, I feel much more European than when I am at home.

“ - GEGED-IT-24-F

On the other hand, the European citizenship and sense of belonging to Europe, following Italian volunteer experience with the Austrian participants during a youth exchange confirms the fact that the perception towards to program as positive and the program promotes the values of Europe. On the other hand, as the volunteer stated that the European Union programs such as Erasmus+ or EVS/ESC promote the dialogue between the nations and creates a bond between the communities of Europe.

“I can tell you about so during one of these exchanges I was in in 2017 in a room with Austrian people. we were watching the disaster European League of Football that were Italy would not even enter the League. So we were both watching the same football game. I'm not a fan of football but we were watching it together and as I understood Austrian people normally cheer for the Italian team then this because the Austrian is normally too little to participate to the big competition. And so instead of cheering for the German one which I thought they actually cheer I think there was significant because 2017 was like at the end kind of 100 years after Italy lost the First World War, which was the war we actually fought against the Austrian Empire. So, It is an image somehow, not that 100 years after where our grandparents, not our grand grand grand parents but grandparents were fighting each other in the Alps 100 years after, thanks to the European Union, we were sitting together and cheering for the same football team but watching TV together..... And if now we are so far away from thinking again to start a war between Italy and Austria today is unthinkable. Somehow it is still thanks to the European Union I think. And the other is made me understand this. That's the point.” – GEGED-IT-23-M

Even though, there was positive thoughts on financial aspects along with critiques concerning the participation of the third countries in the program, the funding mechanisms were criticized by the volunteers as well. As one of the volunteers involved in GEGED had a bad experience during her participation to a short-term EVS program in Croatia before her participation in GEGED. She criticized the program through her experiences, that she did not gain as much as she gained in Turkey by mentioning a well-known practice among the practitioners of the program as “*writing project just to write a project*”.

“Some of the organizations and more for the one in Croatia. Sometimes they just write projects just to write projects. ... sometimes it seems that they just wan. Let’s say in the reckless mean way that they want just to suck European money, you know.... In some projects, they pretend that everything went very well. In fact sometimes it's not true at all. I mean that the one that I had I literally did not understand what we were doing there. I mean, why even they invited us there even for two weeks, but you know its expenses like 12 people, accommodation, food, pocket money. I mean everything costs and the actual benefit of that besides that we stated by the sea for two weeks. I literally I did not see that. So it depends a lot on the project and how the project is implemented.” - GEGED-LT-28-F

It is clear that these experiences create damage to the program's image as the benefit of the volunteer is relatively low. In this regard, the monitoring and evaluation along with the quality mechanisms put within the program increases their role in the success of the program while preventing the experiences like Lithuanian volunteer had in Croatia. As the statement of the volunteer from Hungary involved in GAP reflects this situation by mentioning the evaluation and application systems of the program.

“For me the the financing is we have this huge amount of money, huge amount of resource and sometimes I feel that they don't use it in a good way

somehow because of the application system or somehow because of the evaluation system..... But there is a lot of people, I think a lot of organization getting these grants without having good impact on the society and many because of the lack of information. Many of the organizations or individuals then cannot participate, like somehow I feel that this huge money is not distributed well. In the system and also I think it's pretty can be criticized this program because of the exclusion of many different countries. For example, like the program countries much more represented than the partner countries. The partner countries should be having more role. But of course, that in the other side, it is the European program with the involvement of EU countries so they are the donors not the partner countries. We say that the this programs it's about inclusion, but somehow it does not include everyone.”- GAP-HU-32-F

The visibility of the program along with its reach since its start have been limited as it was previously explained. Even though there have been several opportunities for young people to participate in such programs, they do not have access or information to reach out to the program opportunities. Even though, the visibility of the program is low among young people, its structure provides facilitate measures for young people to participate fully, and they are accessible for the young people with fewer opportunities who are often excluded in the society.

“I think there are many programs that are really interesting and that are helping out of people to do really cool things. Like for example EVS or ESC. But the problem is that I don't think enough young people know about these programs. Because like unless you know more or less a bit of or what's going on in the civil society at the European level, and you know a bit about how NGOs works and so on, it is really difficult to have access to these programs. I don't think everyone knows about the programs, so I think there should be like more information about them..... And I think one of the main, the main important things is that they're accessible to everyone. Um but the

problem again is that not everyone has the information about it.” - GAP-ES-25-F

“Yes, I think that they're not advertise enough, because for me, it was quite hard to find information at the beginning about the EVS program. I just found it like very random on the Internet. I was just searching for some international volunteering. I don't know a lot of people that actually heard about this and also a lot of other programs that are doing similar things. They should be promoted better because they are really some good opportunities for young people especially I think this is the only thing that they should work on it. But besides this they are quite organized from my personal experience.” - GEGED-RO-20-F

Besides the volunteers' involvement in the program and its visibility, one of the volunteers criticized the number of volunteers at the same given time in the organizations. GAP can host up to 4 volunteers while GEGED can host up to 24 volunteers at the same time due to accreditation provided by Turkish NA. The following statement of the volunteer confirms that the number of volunteers affect the volunteering experience. As the number of the volunteer at the same time increases, the volunteers start to engage with each other and it positively impacts the cultural awareness of the volunteer due to enlarged informal network between the volunteers at the same organization.

“For example, when I was in GAP, there was only me and my other my fellow volunteer. There were only two of us. I wish there were more people. This way, we will do more impact and we will have more people impacted because two people cannot impact too much people. So I mean for my experience, if we had like four other people, for example, that would be really nice. For example, GEGED there they're not just volunteers, they are a family. So I like that when I visited them it was really emotional that they

didn't just come to volunteer but also to be strongly related to one another.

“ – GAP-MA-21-M

From the volunteers' experiences and perceptions, it illustrates that the perceptions of the volunteers towards European Union programs are generally positive and they want the program to continue by increasing its scope. Although, it seems that the evaluation, monitoring and application mechanisms of the program have a room for improvement in the eyes of the volunteers. On the other hand, it might be argued that the non-profit principle of the ESC/EVS should be followed undoubtedly as the Lithuanian volunteer's experience in Croatia validates this argument. Furthermore, it is arguable that the program has almost no effects on the community level as it is elaborated further in next chapters. However, it can be said that the impact on the host communities or the volunteers is highly limited due to time, lack of skills and the activities that they have involved. From the volunteers' answers, the programs provided by the EU lack the point of community involvement but focus on the individual involving the program.

5.3. During Volunteering

After explaining the experiences of the volunteers before EVS/ESC, I analysed the process of their volunteering in the host organizations as GEGED and GAP YA under this chapter. During the interviews, the volunteers asked generally about the activities, their challenges during the activities, their relations with the local community, other volunteers and beneficiaries¹⁶ and their impact from their perspective. In addition to that, the hosting organisations' support is asked to understand their relationship with the hosting institution and the staff of the organization.

¹⁶ In here, the participants of the activities carried by the EVS/ESC volunteers are referred as “beneficiaries”.

5.3.1. Activities

Both organizations (GAP YA and GEGED) have been implementing activities with the young people, children and refugees from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan in Gaziantep and Şanlıurfa. The volunteers are mainly involved in the activities concerning their motivation towards the organisations' activities and the availability of the activities during their stay. As some of the volunteers have involved in environmental activities in GEGED which is implemented time to time or activities specifically with the current projects running within the organization such as social rights trainings for refugees or social cohesion projects in GAP. Thus, the volunteers' experiences were varied due to variety of activities taking place at the same time. Furthermore, the partnerships of the organizations changed through the course of their volunteering and they have involved in different activities in the time frame of their volunteering. Additionally, some of the volunteers have initiated their own personal projects such as dance clubs, French or Spanish classes. For the volunteers involved in 2020, some of the volunteers did their activities online due to Covid-19 pandemic.

Table 5.1.Partnerships of the Hosting Organizations

Hosting Organization	Involved Organizations during the activities of the volunteers
GEGED	Red Crescent Community Centres
	Rehabilitation Centre for disabled people
	MUDEM
	Kırkayak Kültür
	Community Centre of INGO
	Oncology hospital
GAP	Red Crescent Community Centre
	Kindergarten run by Syrian refugees
	GAP Youth and Culture House
	Harran University
	Danish Refugee Council

Table 5.7. shows the partnerships of the organizations where the volunteers involved in the activities outside of the hosting organization. The volunteers sometimes involved in the activities of the other organizations due the formal/informal partnerships done with these organizations. According to their statements, these experiences were enriching and increased their skills and contributed their self-development.

Table 5.2. Activities of the volunteers

Code of the volunteer	Involved Activities
<i>GEGED-RO-20-F</i>	Activities with refugees, kindergarten, environmental activities
<i>GEGED-ES-29-M</i>	English classes with children, young people and refugees
<i>GEGED-PT-23-FB</i>	English classes with children and activities with refugee women
<i>GEGED-LT-28-F</i>	English conversation clubs with young people / children, activities with disabled kids
<i>GEGED-IT-24-F</i>	Activities in rehabilitation centre, environmental activities, English classes with children , Activities with refugees
<i>GEGED-IT-23-M</i>	Activities with Syrian refugees, English conversation clubs with young people (Turkish and Syrian)
<i>GEGED-PT-23-F</i>	Sport activities, Sewing workshops with Syrian women, Art Workshops, English conversation clubs
<i>GEGED-IT-23-F</i>	Conversation clubs in English, Handcraft activities with Syrian women, Activities in Oncology hospital and rehabilitation centre, English classes for children, Turkish classes for Syrian children, Cooking and sewing classes with Syrian and Turkish women for social cohesion activities
<i>GEGED-TN-25-F</i>	Media activities, English classes

<i>GEGED-JO-30-F</i>	Zumba (Dance) Classes, English conversation clubs
<i>GEGED-TN-22-M</i>	Outdoor activities, activities with refugee children and youth
<i>GAP-MA-22-F</i>	English speaking clubs, Erasmus+ Information Day at Harran University, French Classes, English Classes
<i>GAP-ES-25-F</i>	English speaking club, Spanish classes, Activities with Syrian children
<i>GAP-MA-21-M</i>	English classes, English speaking club, Turkish classes
<i>GAP-HU-32-F</i>	English classes, Office Work, Social Rights Trainings for Refugees, GIZ Social Cohesion Projects, Activities with Syrian refugees
<i>GAP-BA-26-F</i>	Activities with Syrian children, English classes, Online Activities (due to Covid-19 pandemic)
<i>GAP-MA-25-M</i>	Painting workshops, Office Work, Outdoor Activities, Social Cohesion activities with Syrian and Turkish youth
<i>GAP-MA-26-M</i>	Activities with Syrian children, English classes, Turkish classes, Handcraft activities with Syrian and Turkish youth
<i>GAP-ES-30-F</i>	Activities with Syrian children, Dance Workshop, Workshops with Syrian and Turkish youth, English classes

Table 5.2. was created from the statements of the volunteers as a summary of the activities that they involved. Two volunteers (GAP-HU-32-F , GEGED-IT-23-F) were long-term volunteers. Due to duration of their EVS, they involved almost all of the activities in the organizations as it can be seen in the table. According to the volunteers' statements, the volunteers could take their own initiatives during their volunteering. They found this policy as enriching their experience, increasing their sense of initiative and helping them take responsibility for their own activities. Furthermore, some of the volunteers had their experience during the Covid-19 pandemic, which impacted their activities. They have moved their activities online. Furthermore, two volunteers could not leave due to Covid-19 pandemic after their voluntary service.

In both organizations, the volunteers were given several opportunities to initiate their own activities for the beneficiaries of the organizations. On the other hand, the activities mentioned above were the provided activities by the organizations except than the volunteers took their own initiatives to provide new activities as following statements show. Similarly, Hungarian volunteers involved in GAP in 2018 initiated the English classes and these classes continued to be still implemented by the new volunteers. Moreover, some volunteers like GAP-ES-25-F took the initiative to provide Spanish classes. It was embraced by GAP, which made the volunteer involved more and made her skills at use in the organization. Similarly same initiative was taken by Moroccan volunteers concerning the the French classes.

“In a way yes, because we started the English club, but it is still running after like three years..... We were the first volunteers having this activity and, as the English club somehow we made it well. I think that it's still running the same activity what we started.”-GAP-HU-32-F

“Some of the participants during this, the English speaking Club asked me if I could start giving basic Spanish classes for them, and then I ask, [GAP Staff] if I could do that again. He was like super happy about that, so for three or four weeks I was also giving Spanish classes and it was really cool because even though the group was smaller than the English one, the people that were coming, they were really motivated to learn Spanish and of course in one month you cannot learn a language, but at least they managed to, you know, to be able to introduce a bit themselves, to say what was their name, their age.”-GAP-ES-25-F

“I and other Moroccan volunteer we decided to add French class because.... The people..... wanted a French class so we did this like 2 days of French class per week. It was really great too, although we had not a lot of like students who were interested in French.”- GAP-MA-22-F

As the previous statements shows, the volunteers time to time needed to adapt the circumstances due to beneficiaries' feedback or attitudes concerning the activities. As the Syrian children didn't want to learn English but were eager to learn Turkish, the Moroccan volunteers find a solution as learning Turkish by themselves and teaching to Syrian children afterwards.

“The ladies who were working there they didn't like English lessons and games they preferred if we did Turkish lessons and we couldn't. We couldn't do that because we ourselves we couldn't speak Turkish but we took the challenge. I started with my friend to learn Turkish in order to teach the children in the kindergarten. I remember we started with colors. We were making small papers and we were writing Pembe, Turuncu and we took that challenge and we started teaching the kids. It was very very fun and also it was this is one of the things also that I benefited.”- GAP-MA-26-M

Furthermore, the volunteers often involved in the host community's situations, such as the murder of Emine Bulut¹⁷ in 2019. It enhance their communication with the local volunteers and integration to community while becoming aware about the host communities' concerns. As Spanish volunteer explains the situation and her initiative concerning this aspect as follows:

“Right after that one day it was this case of this woman that was basically murder by her husband in Turkey, and they were already divorced and she was having breakfast with her daughter. And then the guy the husband appeared and he killed her in front of everyone. And I thought because I was, I was saying that a lot of people from the participants and everything they were sharing on Instagram and other social media with the hashtag of the name of the woman Emine Bulut. I would know it was like everyone

¹⁷ Information about the murder can be reached from here : <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-49446389>

was trying to like somehow share solidarity with this woman ... So I thought it was a good moment to try to open the topic. Because in that day we were going to have a class of speaking club. So basically when I when I arrive in the speaking club, I told them, well, I'm pretty sure that you know about this. Probably you know more about this because I've been checking the media, but everything is in Turkish so probably you have more information than me about this case, but I wanted to talk with you about domestic violence and about what happened to this woman and that day there were like half of the participants, maybe a bit less than half, but more or less women. And it was really interesting the way that we were talking about. Some of them were openly in some other, not and It was really interesting. Some of the men were also participating in the debate saying that domestic violence is something that should come to an end. They don't understand how there are men that are like hitting women or killing women, and that is something that we all should learn to avoid that kind of behaviors. Also, the women sometimes were pointing out them things that they were doing that was maybe not like of course, that as obvious as violence, but some kind of things that also perpetuate the inequality between men and women. So it was really, really interesting.” - GAP-ES-25-F

This experience explains that the volunteers became aware of the host communities' issues. It happened predominantly through their interactions during the activities rather than with the community during their daily life. In some cases, beneficiaries did not want to be involved in the activities in the way the volunteers planned. That led the volunteers to adapt the activities according to the beneficiaries' interests. Furthermore, the volunteers mainly provided space to take their own initiatives. It often happened by developing a new activity like Spanish and Moroccan volunteers experience in GAP or developing further cooperation with another organization like in the experience of the Italian volunteer involved in GEGED.

“They had to cut some relationships with some Syrian organization and, we actually met a Syrian organization very close to our organization to GEGED few hundred meters away, and we proposed actually to get to work on that organization, which is Kids Rainbow it was totally, totally open to start a collaboration with the Syrian organization and to let the volunteers in GEGED work in that organization. And this is actually what happened in the following group following us because we met this organization like one week before going away. And so, all the volunteers after us work with this organization....”-GEGED-IT-23-M

On the other hand, the volunteers who have participated in EVS/ESC during the Covid-19 pandemic, change the nature of activities from face to face to online. That led the volunteers as well to implement activities within the volunteering group as it is mentioned by the volunteers' in GEGED. The activities were interrupted due to Covid-19 pandemic and they could not implement the activities face to face until summer 2020 which created a preoccupation among the volunteers as they were not able to predict how the situation would turn out.

“Well, at the beginning nobody was sure if we should just stop the activities or not. It was very hard for everyone to think in advance about the future. So we continued our activities until we couldn't do them anymore. So everything stopped for a short while and we were trying to find some alternatives to find some solutions to do something. Because I was a short term but there were also a lot of people that were doing a long term volunteering, so it was quite hard to think that they are not going to do anything for a few months. And after we understood better the situation, we started to do some online activities to somehow change the previous activities in to adapt them into the online. It was quite hard because it was something nobody expected this. We were quite optimistic. We plan to make an event and we were just postponing it, but at the end we said that OK, we

cannot do it anymore. So we were doing some workshops and everything that was possible online.”-GEGED-RO-20-F

Main challenges of the volunteers were the language as the majority of the beneficiaries were not able to express themselves in English or any other language rather than Arabic and/or Turkish. This situation created a challenge for the volunteers along with a ground for solidarity between the volunteers from North African and European. The volunteers from North African countries helped the other volunteers for translation from Arabic to English during their volunteering to ease the process with the other beneficiaries.

“Yes, yes, because we have so many of them[Syrian refugees] and the Syrian accent is actually very close to Jordanian and Palestinian. Because I'm originally Palestinian, Syrian is similar to. So I had not. I had no problem speaking to them in Arabic. And a lot of time we used to go to activities to translate for the other volunteers like the Portuguese , the Italians and to help the kids communicate with the other people.” GEGED-JO-30-F

It reflects that even though there was support from the local volunteers and organization staff, the North African volunteers (from Jordan, Tunisia and Morocco) whose native language was Arabic, helped the other volunteers implement activities profoundly with the Syrian beneficiaries. On the other hand, it can be argued that it created a positive impact between the volunteers and made the volunteers engage with each other in a meaningful and collaborative manner.

“For instance, I am used to speak in public, but the opportunity in GAP give me opportunity to develop that competence because we were asked to give classes. It could seem that it was easy, but it's not at the beginning as you are not used to be like a teacher or mentor. Yeah, so in the disregard I consider that I improve a lot. Especially it was necessary to speak in English

all the time because we were not able to learn Turkish. I all of us need years so. That is very pretty interesting that how you interact with other people, especially when the when the context political context is maybe not to learn, but a little explosive now. This is the coolest thing in area and not everyone can speak freely about her or his origin. So I remember a lot of conversations regarding you are Kurdish. You are Turkish. I mean So in a cultural I mean. That was another very interesting point. How to interact in that terms be very polite, very diplomatic at the same time.” – GAP-ES-30-F

The volunteers' skill development might change with the activities that they have involved as well as the community that they were in like in the case of Spanish volunteer involved in GAP. Henceforth, It can be said that community directly affect the professional or personal development of the volunteer. As the Moroccan volunteer states, it was adapting the mentally challenging situations and increasing his ability to engage with the strangers as in contrary to be able to be diplomatic as in the case of Spanish volunteer.

“I would say first to speak in public more because you know, in Morocco we know each other whenever we go out to speak, but in Urfa it's a new society. So how will you speak to people you've never known to? People that are different from you? So that's the skills I gained or I learn to be more sociable with people that I see for the first time from another culture. Another skill. I would say my. My intrapersonal skills. More related as well to communication with others. I would say more of how to sustain my mental stability in certain situations. Because sometimes you get frustrated. You miss home. You feel homesickness but you have to stay stable because you are there for a mission and you have to do it as well to do it very well. So yeah, I practiced some meditation as well because sometimes you need to relax. You need to think of what to do.”-GAP-MA-21-M

Additionally, the activities increased their skills concerning the language and their interpersonal skills, Moroccan and Hungarian volunteers' statements reflect. The volunteering increased their interpersonal skills due to their reactions with the beneficiaries. They became able to use communication skills in another language rather than their own or the foreign language that they can speak fluently.

“Voluntary service widen my horizon, my worldview. So, like interpersonal skills were developing a lot. Language skills in Turkish as well.”-GAP-HU-32-F

“Effective communication, definitely. Kesinlikle[Indeed :In Turkish], When first when I arrive to Turkey, I find it a little bit difficult to communicate as most people speak Turkish, and even if a person is speaking in English I find it difficult to communicate, so I developed my own ways to communicate with people so communication definitely number one skill that I have sharpened there.-GAP-MA-26-M

Ultimately, as the activities provided increased their involvement to civil society as they have gained an understanding concerning the nature of the activities of the NGOs like GEGED and GAP YA and the youth work during their stay.

“I got some like I don't want to say teaching skills, but kind of The organization, the teamwork. Some basics even of how the organization like the NGOs and cultural organizations work.” – GEGED-IT-23-F

The activities increased their variety of skills such as public speaking, communication in another language, interpersonal skills, and emotional intelligence from the statements that they have said during the interviews are the validation of this argument. As a summary, the activities increased the involvement of the volunteers. Furthermore, Diprose (2012) argues the short-term assignments are more focusing on the volunteers' personal development than the community itself,

we can see the example of this situation within GEGED's and GAP YA's activities likewise in EVS/ESC activities.

The activities helped the volunteers to be involved in another context different than theirs and widen their horizons towards to refugee issues. These activities helped them create ties with the other volunteers, local community or the beneficiaries. Furthermore, the space that given to the volunteers arguably increased their sense of initiative. At the same time, activities made the volunteers become abreast about the issues of the hosting country, as well as the world because of the debates during the English conversation clubs. The volunteers statements show that these debates were focusing on the current issues of the host community as well as the interest areas of the volunteers.

5.3.2. Support from the hosting and sending organization

During the stay of the volunteers, support from the hosting organization plays a crucial role for their participation. This support keeps their motivation ongoing or helps them to feel integrated to the society. Conversely, support from the sending organization is another aspect of this necessity. Most of the support from the sending organization during the stay of the volunteers were done through phone talks or the e-mails as the volunteers stated. This support consisted of checking the well-being of the volunteer during his/her stay, providing assistance during the travel or issues concerning the insurance.

“Oh, we were a family. whenever I need help, they just call me and tell me hey, I'm near the house? Let's go out together so I still remember mostly of them. There was [local volunteer from GAP] He was my friend, and he was also my supervisor along with [staff of GAP], also [staff of GAP]. [staff of GAP] is a Syrian refugee and [staff of GAP] and her family as well as there are so many so many people.” – GAP-MA-21-M

“Yeah, I think if we had a problem like people were sick and had to go to the hospital or something they were always supporting us and asking us how we felt ... They were very concerned about our well being in the in the organization. Yes, they were there always.”-GEGED-PT-23-F

“I felt that we were really inside of the organization like you know included. But I think that because we had only two and after four volunteers, I think that if the organization is hosting small number of volunteers, it's much more easy to support them and involve them.”-GAP-HU-32-F

“They were [president of GEGED] and [staff of GEGED]. They were like very nice and helpful people like they would solve any problem we face. If we need help about the personal things for like traveling around and stuff and he was very helpful.”-GEGED-JO-30-F

“He used to also to come and visit us and try to check on us if we need anything and we were always going to ask if we had any questions. We went to him and ask him and he was like very helping a lot more than I can imagine.”-GAP-MA-25-M

As volunteer statements above show that the relationship were not a hierarchical one. Staff vs volunteer conflict were never existed. The volunteers' statements reflect that they have felt part of the hosting organization regardless it is GEGED or GAP YA. They have felt included in each step of their volunteering rather than looked down. On the other hand, the volunteers considered that each staff member has different roles in mediating the conflicts, organizing the events, and being a support person for the volunteers as mentors.

“.... They were very cool from the beginning and then [staff of GEGED], I think it is a very important piece of the organization because he does like a very special work of putting people together. And he mediates some conflicts

that can exist a lot and he is always like inviting people to share. Because he always shares first, he gets there in the start sharing and then people see that and think OK, no next time I'm going to share and he is very creative, as well it helps when we don't know what to do in a class or in some activity. Yeah, he is more like in the house with us then [staff of GEGED],. But [staff of GEGED], is also very important because he gives discipline and a lot of serious information yet that it was really good. My relationship with both of them.”-GEGED-PT-23-FB

Furthermore, the volunteers considered the organization's staff and the other volunteers mainly as a family rather than an organizational structure. That can be criticized because the relationship can be considered an unprofessional one. But it is the well-known practice in grassroots and when it is considered that both organizations are small youth grassroot organizations it is inevitable. This perspective shows that the volunteers were welcomed as a part of the team and considered themselves as a member of the staff during the activities. That shows the organizations' commitment to the volunteers' well-being and their involvement from the volunteers' perspective.

5.3.3. Financial Support and Insurance

All volunteers involved in GAP and GEGED considered the EU's financial support as enough. The support provided to the volunteers is around 200 EURs with the current exchange rate of today, this amount is around 1800 Turkish Liras which is almost in the minimum wage of Turkey. When it is considered that the volunteers are provided with accommodation, and the money provided for them is for their personal expenses and food expenses, the financial support provided can be considered enough. Although, the volunteer from Hungary who is currently living in Antalya stated that the money provided for Şanlıurfa wouldn't be enough if the volunteer involved in EVS/ESC in Antalya due to income level disparity between the cities.

“In Urfa, it was more than enough ... because we are in southeast of Turkey. But you know, ... let’s say that everyone in the Turkey they have the same support but between the cities there are big difference as financial difference. At least at this time. When they are in another city, they get all the same money. It was perfect. In Antalya, it wouldn’t bbe enough for example, we are giving more money for the volunteers, but here is more difficult with that way.”-GAP-HU-32-F

Italian volunteer who is currently doing Erasmus+ Traineeship in Gaziantep after his volunteering compared his experience in Brussels and Gaziantep. As he received the same allowance for the time he spent in Brussels and Gaziantep reflects the issue between the income disparity more profoundly than the Hungarian volunteer comparing Antalya to Şanlıurfa.

“Also now, for example with the Erasmus+ Internship. And as I told you in Belgium and I'm doing it now here and I'm getting the same amount of money in Gaziantep and in Brussels. In Gaziantep 350 Euro I can basically live in Brussels with 350 euro. I was paying half of my room rent” – GEGED-IT-23-M

The statements illustrates that arguably the disparity between the income level of the cities should be considered during the provision of the allowance for the organization and for the volunteer. The same allowance for all cities within the same country where the income disparity between the cities is high is neither beneficial for the volunteers nor the organizations running in bigger cities than the cities with lower income populations like Gaziantep Şanlıurfa. That situation as well stated previously within the EVS Impact Study in 2017 (Brandenburg, 2017).

“And then also I don't know like in about the really liked how the insurance worked. That European Cigna probably know it's amazing insurance. ... For me it happened that when I arrived and my grandfather he had cancer

and while I was staying there he got really bad. Well, he died and I needed to go back to Lithuania for funeral and like for four days and the Cigna covered ... I mean I did not even, you know, I wouldn't even thought about that. Not to ask for reimbursement because you know to buy a ticket from Turkey to last night from Gaziantep to Lithuania. Like a day before. Imagine the price is well, yeah exactly yeah. [Staff of GEGED] said like hey, try to write them. He said it might not be covered. But they might cover, you know, reimburse you. And yeah, I mean it took like less than I don't less than 10 days and the money were already back into my bank account".– GEGED-LT-28-F

"I mean I was very lucky with it. I think so with me like both times I had to go to the hospital. I had no problem like it was very fast. I had all the tests I need, I had even more. Some of them I didn't even need to. They bought me the medicines and all that. Then they refund it. It was it was. It was good."– GEGED-PT-23-F

Additionally, the volunteers have found CIGNA as insurance provided within the frame of EVS/ESC as useful. From the volunteers' experiences, it can be considered that CIGNA has been beneficial, fast, and provided support for the volunteers' well-being during the program. Most of the volunteers interviewed were the short-term volunteers and they did not use the insurance, though from the experiences of two volunteers mentioned above concerning two distinctive experiences can be considered as an example that the insurance were beneficial for the involvement of the volunteers. To summarize, it can be argued that the financial support for the capital cities or the other cities where income level is high should be adjusted according to the income level of the town and CIGNA or likewise insurance system should be used as a measure for the support of the well-being of the volunteer.

5.3.4. Relation with the local community and beneficiaries

The relationship between the volunteers and the local community is considered low regardless of the activities or the duration of the EVS/ESC or their experiences within the organisation. Most of the relation between the volunteers and the local community were the communication between the organisations' beneficiaries and them. The beneficiaries have acted as a bridge for the volunteers to communicate with the other community members. This situation increased the involvement of the volunteer in the local community.

“Well, I was many times when we were finishing the activities in the afternoon or in the evenings, I was going with the participants and some people of the organization to have some tea in a terrace or in a bar and we were we were doing that almost every week so we were like a group of people between the participants and the people from the organization that we were also like sharing moments outside of the activities of the organization...”-GAP-ES-25-F

Generally, the overall relations of volunteers with the local volunteers and beneficiaries were meaningful according to volunteers' statements as above. On the other hand, some volunteers have more profound connections with the local community during their stay and their relations with the local community members varied from the local stores, police or shops in the community. Furthermore, the volunteers kept their communication with the beneficiaries after their return.

“Yes, yes. I made friends with the police of the night. There were, like, you know, a night patrol and I go on walks at 1:00 - 2:00 AM and then once I meet with them and we sit on a table and they were talking in Turkish and I was using Google translation and they will watch and at the same time back in the days in 2019 at the end of July there was the African Cup. It was a football competition and they were supporting Algeria because Algeria won the competition and we were talking about that and those police man

became my friend and whenever I go out we say Salamin Aleykum and we met. We have some cafe tea and then we have some good talks and then we just depart off. There was a there was a guy who had the restaurant and I went there and he was from Syria. He was a refugee from Syria and he was telling me about the war situation in Syria. And how about how he came with his family to Turkey and he established a new business.” GAP-MA-26-M

The local volunteers' role in the activities were helping to the volunteers concerning daily issues, making translation and showing the city to make them engage with the community. Although, the local volunteers become the main source of the information about the issues of Turkey and Syrian crisis due to refugee population in both cities.

“ In GEGED, There are some local volunteers. guys from Gaziantep that go there like and try to help us. Sometimes they come to the activities with us and like if there is need of translation they can help or for some other issues like so like this. Those guys like we got super close with them like especially some people that because, like they were our main connection to the people like we were seeing them everyday and then from them we maybe we met their families, some of them or other friends.”-GEGED-IT-23-F

The most distinctive experience was the Moroccan volunteer's experience as an example of the situations which beneficiaries acting as a bridge between the local community and the volunteer. The volunteer became a member of hiking club in Şanlıurfa through the talk with the beneficiary of the GAP YA. It shows that the local beneficiaries were the main initiation point for the volunteers to create a contact with the local community:

“I remember there was this my friend. His name is Halil. He used to attend “Gençlik Merkezi” from Time to Time.... I was very shocked like it was the

first time that he came to youth center and we started talking like very deeply and he told me why don't you come join us tomorrow like there is this club we go hiking and I said OK why not? He gave me his phone number but I was so lazy and I told him maybe it's not a good idea. I become a little bit scared because all people there are Turkish. I'm not sure if I'm gonna find someone who's speaking like English, because Halil this friend of mine, his English is very poor, but he was very excellent at communicating with me. So I hesitated and they started throwing excuses. he convinced me he told me no, you come to my house. We have breakfast. We go together and I was like OK, yes, why not? So that's how it first started like. It was weird in the very beginning as all people they knew each other and they were speaking just Turkish an I was there like by myself. Only for you know, like I couldn't know anyone, but it took only 30 minutes to start integrating and everybody like started talking with me..... I found out that a lot of people actually speak English.....wonderful experience and since that day I started attending.-GAP-MA-26-M

The volunteers seldomly felt excluded from the local community due to language barrier or the perception towards the Arab community or cultural differences or the approach towards strangers from the local community. As the Moroccan volunteer's experience, she felt excluded and ignored within the society during her first days. This situation led her to involve with Syrian refugee community which she found more closer to her than Turkish community as the following statement reflects the reasoning behind this situation.

"I went another square of shops and I don't understand this situation, but the the man who was the owner of the store. ... He ignored me and my friend were just trying to ask him if he has like some olives and some another thing. He was just like ignoring and asking us to leave. We didn't get that, it was our first and second day in Turkey. We were so confused why is he doing this?..... I'm not gonna say like, It's not really racism, but I don't want to

bring because it's a big word, but I understand like how people some people. Very few people there they behave with Arabs in another way where they only speak Turkish.” – GAP-MA-22-F

On the other hand, some volunteers involved during the Covid-19 pandemic in GAP and GEGED, had almost no contact due to given circumstances derived from the Covid-19 pandemic. As the activities were interrupted, they couldn't engage with neither beneficiaries nor the local community during their stay.

“No. I only had some friends that I made while during class that's it. But outside of that, ... I didn't have chance to even meet with the people because of Corona. So that's a little bit different, but I had still communication with the people that were coming to classes.”-GAP-BA-26-F

“OK, so about the others aside from our fellow volunteers, the locals, I would say that, We did these activities with the Turkish youngsters and we had fun ... but we actually only went to the activities and basically come back. I actually had no special relationship with one of the persons I met at let's say activities we were doing.” – GEGED-IT-23-M

It can be argued that the reason of no contact or less contact with the local community was the reason of Covid-19 pandemic. Conversely, the Italian volunteer's statement raises the issue of the volunteer community as GEGED has numerous volunteer at the same time. This situation make the volunteers close with each other and hinder their engagement with the local community.

“I think maybe the biggest criticism one could maybe move to GEGED is that since, like the building itself, it's very nice. You have a lot of other European people and so you all live together so you have a lot of room for like fun and staying in the evening together and doing stuff together. So the point is that aside doing these activities which actually are not so

frequent in the sense that there is not so like 10 hours of work at each day. Not at all. Let's say the problem was that we did not actually get very in touch with the local community we were staying in GEGED, having a lot of fun together. But at the end it was mostly within the people other European volunteers, or at last the Turkish Local volunteers, but we almost did not have any contact or deep contact with the people outside of the organization.”-GEGED-IT-23-M

It is a general obstacle among the organizations involving international volunteers as huge groups. (Lough & Tiessen, 2018b) When the volunteers are involved in a group volunteering activity, the volunteers tend to socialize within the group and given the circumstance due to Covid-19 and the duration of the volunteering as two months for the volunteer who indicated the statement above is the usual outcome. Short-term volunteering and group volunteering comes with the challenge of creating a cultural awareness or promoting international understanding. Henceforth, it can be said that the volunteers coming from different countries have involved in an intercultural environment which helped the volunteers to connect each other rather than the outside community. As in the next chapter, I have explained the relationship between the volunteers, which created significant impact due to cultural differences between the volunteers coming from different countries.

5.3.5. Relation with the other volunteers

The relationship between the volunteers coming from different cultures is the backbone of the cultural awareness aspect of the EVS/ESC program. The volunteers involving the activities coming from distinctive identities due to their cultural identities. Moreover, they can connect more comfortable with each other than the local community or the organization staff due to the similarity of the role. Although, as the nature of the human relation, the conflicts were usually visible within the volunteer community specially due to the cultural identity of the volunteer concerning the religion or the way of living. As the following statement of Spanish

volunteer involved in GAP reflects this issue during her encounter with the Moroccan volunteers.

“To be honest, no, I didn't shock in Urfa. I expected this this ambiance and to be honest was more positive than I was expecting. I remember one of [situations]. [Another volunteer from Spain in GAP] and me shared the flat with two girls from Morocco, the colleagues. We could say yeah it was their first experience abroad. So for her it was like a trauma at the beginning our costumes. Like we're going to invite some male friends to dinner. For them it was like impossible. They at the beginning they can share the same space with a man, but then step by step we established rules and then we had an agreement. If you are able to do establish like a smooth transition, with our flatmates.” – GAP-ES-30-F

Additionally, volunteer community as I defined became the supporting mechanism of the volunteers during the Covid-19 pandemic as the volunteers could not implement any activity with the beneficiaries. As a result, They have started to do activities for each other in GEGED due to number of the volunteers at the same time. This community became a support and solidarity mechanism for the volunteer as stated in Tunisian volunteer's answer.

“My relationship with the other volunteers was perfect actually, because each one of them taught me something and I taught them a few things. We always manage to make this activities together because we couldn't go for the activities because they were cancelled because of the pandemic. So we collaborated and we made our own activities in GEGED so to make something or to plan for something to design anything in GEGED....” – GEGED-TN-22-M

The continuity of this relationship between the volunteers have immense importance. GEGED has constantly changing short-term volunteers, it might

impact the involvement of long-term volunteers if they are alone as a long-term volunteer. The volunteer from Italy involved in volunteering reflected that situation by providing a hypothetical example of being alone as a long-term volunteer.

“... because we were together all the time and we were in the same house and doing the same activities. So like we were basically 24/7 altogether and yeah. So like emotionally that's the biggest part we can say like. If we talk about the social aspect of the experience, if we don't talk about the volunteering itself, yeah. ... I mean, it was nice. I have to say if I was the only long-term, through the all period..... I had to every two months meet and a new group and then have to say goodbye like not having even one person staying with me. It would have been hard I think because like as I said, you stay a lot together, so I mean. I've seen at least three groups coming and going of short terms. And it's like it's hard. It's hard for the organization, but also like especially for you.”-GEGED-IT-23-F

Duration of volunteering often creates a hierarchical relation between short and long-term groups. Generally, the long-term volunteer feels not fully included in the short-term groups. It becomes challenging for the long-term volunteer to keep the relations with the short-term volunteers by knowing that they will leave soon. It can be said that this situation affects the volunteers' involvement in long-run.

Although, the volunteer community in both organizations helped volunteers to learn from each other and make them develop cultural awareness. As GAP and GEGED receive more than one volunteer at the same time, that is arguable that the volunteers' connection between each other played a role in the skill development of the volunteers as they can practice the skills during the activities supporting and learning from each other.

5.3.6. Cultural Awareness and Autonomy

In the nature of the international volunteering activities, specifically the international volunteering activities concerning international volunteering for international understanding like EVS/ESC, the cultural shock is the main issue that the volunteers face during their stay (Lough, 2014; Sherraden, Lough, & McBride, 2008). It was not different in GEGED or GAP. All the volunteers repeatedly indicated that they have gained some level of cultural awareness concerning gender roles in Turkey and the society in South-East Turkey during their stay. This is reflected in the statements of the volunteers. Moreover, it can be said that that is connected with the structure of the activities as they were constructed to develop cultural awareness within EVS/ESC. Furthermore; the involvement of the volunteers from different cultural groups at the same time specifically North African and European helped the volunteers to develop this cultural awareness in a profound manner. That situation is reflected in the statement of Tunisian volunteer below.

“In Tunisia like I told you, I'm active in three Association and but then my first Association is how to learn Quran and to practice Islam the 2nd, It's about orphanage. Second is [sending organization]..... In Turkey, uh, it's a good the opportunity to meet another people from another religion, maybe because There is many Christian and but I like it because they are very good people. All are very good people. They respect my religion, Islam and me. Also I respect their religion. I don't have difficulty about the other volunteers really.”-GEGED-TN-25-F

The primary. issue concerning the culture has been for the volunteers and their communication with the local community during the stay of the volunteers. It can be said that the volunteers were not well-informed about the cultural issues about the region before their participation by their sending organizations. On the other hand, the gender roles and women's position in Gaziantep and Şanlıurfa have been the most mentioned topics when it came to cultural awareness or cultural shock

during the interviews. Some of the statements below indicates that the cultural shock experienced by the volunteers during their stay.

“...You always have questions whenever you go to a country that's completely different from yours. Like religion, culture, all that ...But I mean, I think questioning is not a bad thing. So I mean of course I questioned some things like ... I don't know, maybe mostly because of the religion or I don't know the way like the women like the women part like in the country. Especially in that that part of the Turkey. I think your question more of those things when you come from a European country. The part of the woman in the society, like why they have to dress like this or like that or why like they cannot be on the street at night or in the restaurants have different spaces for men or for the families or for the women. Uh, in the mosque, like why they might just pray in a different place.” – GEGED-PT-23-F

As it is explained in “Motivation to Involve in EVS/ESC” section, the volunteers from North Africa (Tunisia and Morocco) considered Turkey as culturally similar place. It was one of the reasons for both volunteers that they wanted to involve in the activities in Turkey rather than Europe. This situation was reflected profoundly in the following statement.

“Actually, it wasn't that different because Tunisia and Turkey aren't that different in the culture or even religion.... Maybe it's, uh, it differs only on the way of the living there. And the way people are dealing with things. So I didn't find that much difference.”-GEGED-TN-M-22

On the other hand, when they compare their own country to Turkey, some volunteers have found distinctive similarities concerning the traditions or way of life. They have considered that Turkey has been similar to their countries some year ago like as the Italian volunteer states following :

“I don't think there is a so much difference between the Italian and Turkish culture, it's like Italy how it used to be 50 years ago. I think in ... It's a generalization? Because Istanbul I think it's like very West and Antalya. I think also for Turkish people, maybe Antep is not like the most advanced city, however I actually that's the reason also why I came back. So to me it's not necessarily an issue, you know because what we lost kind of in Italy is this kind of traditional way of living, which is not bad but let's say we move to something else. Now we are a fast society with a lot of opportunities.” – GEGED-IT-23-M

On the other hand, similar to the Italian volunteer statement, the comparison of Turkey within Turkey by the volunteers was remarkable. According to the volunteers' experiences between different places such as Antalya, İzmir or Istanbul with Gaziantep or Şanlıurfa was the central aspect of their comparison like Lithuanian volunteer states :

“.... Turkey for Lithuanians, let's put it this way is the one of the main vacation destinations you know. İzmir Bordum, Antalya, Alanya and so on. I mean, a lot of people going there. I don't know, I'm a traveler, but surprisingly I never been in Turkey prior to Gaziantep ... it was the first time I actually entered ... the Turkey and I saw that real conservative part of Turkey. It was like nothing that I experienced before. I traveled a lot in Europe and there maybe was like the biggest culture shock. But in that in a good way, you know it was just so different. I kind of liked it.” - GEGED-LT-28-F

Furthermore, the volunteers' interaction between themselves changed their perception or created cultural awareness concerning Turkey's issues. As it is mentioned before about being lived in a volunteering community and learning from each was the aspect of the volunteers that reflected in the statement of the

Portuguese volunteer. She stated that she had learn about Turkey from the Slovenian volunteer who were studying in Turkey before the volunteering.

“With a girl that appeared there, [volunteer from Slovenia], she told me that she studied in Istanbul. She was studying social communication and that people couldn't really speak about politics there. Because of the regime and there was new for me and I understood a lot of behaviors and why I was not behaving properly even like in a naive way in there. That was very shocking for me and that's made me learn a lot and bring a lot of stuff home about our faced my freedom of expression... It was very different for me to live in a place in which people don't talk about politics. They don't have that openness to do so, or even if they have. It's not good for them. Yeah, also the the you know the that chance from the from the mosques to call people to pray. Yeah, I was very surprised when I first heard that I did not know what it was and I asked to the volunteers if it was some kind of Public service of music. But I didn't know. I was very surprised, yeah. “ – GEGED-PT-23-F

Moreover, the volunteers experience is not only limited to the culture. Receiving information and gaining knowledge from the first-hand concerning the issues regarding Syrian crisis changed their perspective and increased their awareness towards to issue as the Romanian volunteer stated. Arguably, the volunteers interaction regardless it is concerning culture or the issues of the host community made them gain awareness.

“....before arriving there, I realized that I wasn't aware of what's happening in that part of the world.... We've got involved in some local events, let's say some movie nights where we saw some documentaries and we had a small access but just good enough to see what's happening there and also behind the borders and it was quite shocking that if you go a few 100 of kilometers away from that part, you don't hear anything. I mean, everyone is concerned more or less about what's happening in the local space, but no, almost nobody is thinking about what's happening in that side

of the world? I mean, maybe you hear something from time to time, but if you ask more questions and nobody is going to answer to you because they don't know. I was quite sad about this and I felt somehow ashamed that I was living a good life here in Romania, but I never thought that maybe some people are actually living some really bad times and they don't have all the things that I have and I've tried since then to bring some things that I learned and to spread this awareness. To spread at least some movies that are relevant, maybe some articles and things like that, so that at least people can have an idea and not just some news that pop up sometimes.”-GEGED-RO-20-F

On the other hand, some of the volunteers have experienced Turkey due to their personal opinions in another way. They considered the cultural restrictions or the differences as a valuable commodity and embraced it in a proper manner by changing their attitude and approaches towards to the local community. This reflected in the statement of the Spanish volunteer below in a profound manner.

“I think I have to say that I am not objective, because I love Turkey and I love the culture and the people, I think we have similar things. But I also think we have also have many different things related to religion probably and I think one of the things that I that I felt when I was in there. It was more related to the fact that I'm a woman than to the fact that I'm just like European or Spanish. Because of course, the way that I behave in Spain is not the same way that women behaving in Urfa. When I arrive in there, I remember that for me it was, I've always respected the culture and I never meant to insult or hurt anyone, but just by the way that I would sometimes wearing my clothes, people were looking at me or men were trying to approach me in the streets and talk to me or flirt. And by the time I found it funny. But I do understand that is something related also to the culture and that was for me something like different and new to experience. I think it's something that can happen in any part of the world. but the way they behave in Spain or the way that I wear my clothes is completely different as

the way that they behave in Urfa. So I do understand that could be something disruptive.” -GAP-ES-25-F

Some volunteers were informed or knew about the issues before their departure due to their interest on the region. As it is argued that there is a distinctive difference between the informed and uninformed volunteer (Vveinhardt, et. al., 2019). The example below shows the positive benefit of involving EVSV/ESC with having information. As the knowledge of the volunteers helped their integration to local community and prevent the cultural shock up to some level like in the case Spanish volunteer (GAP-ES-25-F). Another Spanish volunteer stated below that she was aware about the cultural restrains of the region before participating the program.

“Of course it was like a cultural difference. Pretty notorious. But in my case, to be honest I didn't have any kind of problem. I mean, if you have the responsibility to be aware, that would be very different and you need to adapt yourself in the situation.... It wasn't a problem at all. Maybe a women in that area could be like a shock for some people. Because real it is real. Because OK, Turkey is different depending of the area but or Urfa is a very close. It's not close my society. So for instance, the dress code in I mean. You have to adapt your clothes your way of life. ... Try to be not hide but calm depending of your personality. There is a Muslim culture. I mean is certainly different.” -GAP-ES-30-F

It is evident that the volunteers developed cultural awareness up to a certain level where they have found similarities or in contrast a distinction between their own culture with the Turkish culture. However, it is worth to mention that the volunteers coming from North Africa felt more nearness than the European volunteers. The cultural awareness and the knowledge about the host country as Turkey are increased as the statements above confirms this argument. It can be argued that increased cultural awareness helped the volunteers adapt specific situations and help them develop autonomy and gain self-confidence during their stay. Some of the volunteers haven't been outside of their family house or abroad or lived with

other people at the same place and the experience in the hosting organization helped them develop in a way the autonomy up to a certain level due to the challenges that they have faced by living with other people in same flat or in their words with strangers.

“Actually, I've never lived on my own before that. I live with family, my parents and my siblings. So that was the first time that I live on my own. There was another Moroccan Volunteer was with me there and I had a company and we coexist together. We had like living together that was amazing for me and I gained something that's to live on your own. I haven't done this in my city, but when you go abroad to live in a place that you have never been before and with someone that you have never been with, that give me like a huge amount of self confidence. I said to myself if I leave these two months on my own with somebody else I can do it like on any other times.....” -GAP-MA-25-M

As the volunteer stated, he learnt about living with the others during his/stay in Urfa and became more independent due to his abroad experience. On the other hand, it gave him a sense of independence and autonomy to be alone with himself and involve in other activities abroad rather than volunteering. Some volunteers considered the experience as a challenge to themselves as they couldn't communicate in their mother tongue. Additionally, by being in the new environment different from their previous experiences, made them develop a sense of autonomy and an ability to deal with situations in abroad.

“...as I said before, many of the things I think about this experience come to the same idea of like a super plural life. Like for example, I was in the room with other two girls and usually I used to stay in a single room for example like. We work together 12 people in the same house. So like you have to face many things in communication and to adapt yourself and to understand your limits of social life, I mean, I don't consider myself. I mean,

I can adapt quite well, but anyway, like 8 months quite long so. It was not in a good way like in the end it was amazing. – GEGED-IT-23-F

Mentally too, to be alone in a completely different place where you cannot communicate because people don't speak your language, you know. And being a country with a completely different culture for the people, yeah, definitely improves yourself. – GEGED-PT-23-F

“... I was normally used to travel or to experience other places , but I've always been in Europe so that here I think it's easier to communicate also to get to ask for help because you can use English or you can use languages that are close to Italian so we don't have so many difficulties. But if there in Turkey, ... apart from when I was with volunteers and with the mentor that we could speak English. But, when I was going out and I was with locals, the only way was Turkish and so also in that case. I mean I had to solve it. I had to solve problems by myself and so I think that helped.- GEGED-IT-24-F

On the other hand, the activities had role on the development of the volunteers along with the experience involving with the other volunteers or living alone. As most of the activities in the organizations focused on the education and implementing activities with kids, the volunteers gained skills to implement activities with the people from other cultures. Moreover, they gained autonomy and self-confidence to implement such activities outside of the organizations involved in the study.

Yeah, because this situation like giving the class. By myself or giving advice to people with whom I don't share the mother tongue or any other tongue like the Syrian girls, teaching them English. It is it.... You have to get autonomous and do things. -GEGED-PT-23-FB

Meanwhile, autonomy of course with the kind of activities... Some of them I was alone sometimes. So yeah, you have to challenge yourself. When you

are in a class in front of so many kids and teenagers. You need to make yourself heard.-GEGED-ES-29-M

From another perspective, the volunteers learn how to adopt new situations due to working in an international environment. On the other hand, the experience for some volunteer was quite enriching that the volunteers started to become capable trusting themselves and willing to involve in different activities due to gained skills from the volunteering experiences.

I think one of the things that I've learned is that it was difficult sometimes to work as a team because all the volunteers we were like really different between us most of the time I spent. I spent most of the time with one of the volunteers from Morocco and we were quite different in the way that we were working. He was a bit of a mess and I was always trying to control everything. So, I think that we learn from each other and then like all the activities were always funny. We always had a good moment with the participants. So I think like learning to work in different kind of environments with different people is something. Also it's an added value from the project.-GAP-ES-25-F

“About self-confidence I believe very much very much I have developed like ... I'm capable of doing so many things I'm capable of trusting myself in certain situations, so I learn to trust myself and to be confidence with whatever things that I have everyone can do so many things.” - GAP-MA-21-M

The overall picture of the volunteers' experiences indicate that they have gained cultural awareness from their experiences during activities, their interaction with the community, beneficiaries and each other. Additionally, they developed an autonomy up to a certain level through acquiring new skills such as teamwork, working in intercultural environment, providing classes for children. Furthermore, their experiences made them embrace the cultural diversity came with the

volunteering during their stay due to different circumstances such as sharing a flat or a room with the other people from different distinctive cultures. As it is worth to mention although it is arguable up to the extent that the volunteers' presence from two unique cultures as European and North African at the same time, created an additional impact on the development of the volunteers which is reflected through the statements of the volunteers above. Furthermore, their volunteering affected the volunteers' cultural approaches towards the other nations and other cultures derived from their experiences due to work with two distinctive cultures such as Syrian and Turkish.

5.3.7. Impact of the volunteers

Even though EVS/ESC is focused on increasing the volunteers' skills and competencies rather than their impact on the local community, it can be said that the volunteers made an impact arguably limited or substantial. When the volunteers are asked to self-reflect about their impact on the organization or the organisation's beneficiaries, they have claimed that they created an impact up to a certain level such as changing the beneficiaries' attitude and increasing the skills of beneficiaries.

“I might not have a clear idea of the impact that I left, but it depends on people..... one of the student that I had is now pursuing her studies in English literature. We've talked about that and she was like I don't know what to do, but would I? Would I go for this option or not? And I was like well, English. For me, something that I enjoy. If you enjoy it as well, I think that would be the right path for you. And later on when I came back to Morocco, she sent me a message saying hey, I am studying now English and I was like I'm happy if that's only the thing that I have gained, I would be proud of it because there is some person who is studying what do you love because I told them to do it.”-GAP-MA-21-M

The statement above shows that the volunteer has impacted upon the beneficiaries' life concerning her career goals and increased her involvement in education by being a role model for her during the activities that he involved in GAP. Another volunteer's statement shows that during the course of their activities, they saw change and grow on the participants happened concerning their English level.

"I don't think I got I teach them that much of English but I do so like impact of them freely talking English only that. Of course, I'm again saying it was Corona, I didn't have that big chance but I only could see improvement how people would talk like freely more from the beginning and from the end of our classes."-GAP-BA-26-F

One volunteer involved in GEGED, defined the impact as a two-way street. To elaborate, while teaching to the volunteers, he had learnt from the experience of teaching. As I define here, it refers to the non-formal learning which derives from EVS/ESC's nature, and its informal learning feature. That helps the volunteers be involved in two-way learning where the learning occurs in both sides, the beneficiaries and the educator in our case the volunteer. That learning process is reflected in the statement of the Tunisian volunteer as follows.

"I define it like a process of learning. So, when you are when you are in doing anything like to help in this world, you are teaching people and you learn. You learn at the same time. Because everything you do, there is some people who are helping you in doing it. So you somehow engage yourself in the thing that you are doing with the others with your skills and do the things that you learned from previous experiences. So you are putting your yourself in what in the thing that you are doing and also others so people can learn from you the way you are doing stuff and they can get what they want and they can give you a some knowledge and they can give you some motivation to do things differently, so I see it as an experience for a win-win situation."GEGED-TN-22-M

As it can be seen from the previous statements that volunteers tend to believe that they created impact up to a certain level although, the volunteer from Portugal reflects the duration of the volunteering might affect the level of the impact upon the beneficiaries of their activities.

“I like to believe that I created an impact and I think I did. But I also think that two months it's because I did the short term like two months is nothing, If you want to create a real impact in someone's life.”- GEGED-PT-23-F

“I would say I was just one more. I tried to do my best, I tried to be as much as involved, contributed to the activities and that's all.”-GEGED-ES-29-M

Ultimately, when it is though that the impact of the volunteer on the community or the beneficiaries, it is visible due to structure of the activities as they are consecutive. Although, due to lack of impact measurement procedures within the hosting or sending organizations' structure, this is not evaluated. Thus, it can be said that limited or substantial but unevaluated and invisible impact of the volunteers is exist. Furthermore, as there are no concrete impact measurement systems concerning the volunteers' effect to the local community or the organization itself within Erasmus+ or European Solidarity Corps, it can be said that this is the programs' lack point.

Moreover, the organizations' activities are not only implemented by themselves but relies on the partnerships with the third organizations to provide wide range of activities according to the volunteers' interests, the impact measurement comes with a burden as human-resource-wise and financial-wise. As both organizations involved in the study are the grassroots and they do not have enough capacity to implement such an impact study. At the same time, that's the limitation of this particular study that I couldn't communicate with the volunteers' beneficiaries due to restrictions of the Covid-19 and to limit the scope of the study.

5.4. After Volunteering

The volunteering does not conclude with the return of the volunteer but continues according to EVS/ESC cycle. Both sending and hosting organizations have role concerning the involvement of the volunteer. After analysing the experiences of the volunteers until they finished their volunteering towards the international volunteering literature and the EVS/ESC framework, I analysed their involvement in civil society and their relations with the sending organizations after their return. During this process, the volunteers were asked to reflect their experiences after the volunteering, their communication with the sending organization, their involvement in education and employment life, and the impact of EVS/ESC on themselves.

5.4.1. Impact of EVS/ESC on the Volunteers

The volunteers had an opportunity to put their practical knowledge at use during their stay. Thus, the volunteering provides a chance for the volunteers to use their theoretical skills in the field and knowledge gained during their studies. On the other hand, they have learnt about the mechanisms set in youth organizations, cultural institutions, and community centres through their volunteering period. Generally, the recognition of the skills acquired during the volunteering is the issue. The Spanish volunteer reflect that the issue would be the recognition of the skills that she gained.

“We had to study in some subjects of sociology..... integration of communities. So that is something that I learned in there because it is something that in fact the organization does. When basically they're bringing people together that are coming from different backgrounds, but they live all in the same place, and I mean like Kurdish people, Syrian people, Turkish ones. So I learn a lot about that, and I think that's something really beneficial, but it's not something that you can easily prove because I was not doing just that. You know what I mean. So, but I think that that's something that should be changed within the whole program, not that it's their fault, of course. in fact something that I've learned as well is what

kind of necessities and projects do you have in different places. Because of course the necessities that you have in Urfa, the people in Urfa needs completely different things than people in Spain or people in France, or people in Norway. So basically I think learning from the context of the country or the context of the local level. It's really important and it's something that you can do things to EVS because you really go to a place or project where basically you're helping people directly.”-GAP-ES-25-F

The volunteers became more open to other cultures and gained an ability to talk with other people more openly. Furthermore, it is clear that the volunteers changed their views towards life and created interpersonal relationships during their volunteering period. As the volunteer from Jordanian volunteer reflects the situation from the perspective as becoming more open to talk in her life towards the strangers:

“For me it was like the best life experience I had ever until now..... I am a very shy person, but dealing with other people in other culture.... I was more open today with people and you even speak like I've never had a very long conversation like that with a stranger, for example....”-GEGED-JO-30-F

For instance, the city's impact was more visible than the impact of the activities or the organization involved in volunteers' answers. Increased Syrian refugee population and its increasing expat community due to presence of INGOs and intergovernmental organizations in Gaziantep allowed the volunteer to communicate with the other NGOs working in the field. As in the Italian volunteer's case, he was involved in another NGO as a trainee after his volunteering in Gaziantep through his contacts that he developed during the volunteering. Thus, it can be said that even solely being abroad and being exposed to the international environment increases the opportunities of young people and creates an impact on their professional and personal life.

“This affect is more due to the fact that Gaziantep, for those who want to work in international cooperation is the best spot probably in Turkey to go

now. So at least the impression we get here now because it's so full of NGOs and there are so many Syrians and so on. So yes, it had an impact, but because I was in the same city where all these other organization where so if the activities we did have an impact on my, let's say my professional life.”- GEGED-IT-23-M

Even though, the volunteers are exposed to the different cultures as it is argued before under cultural awareness section, the volunteers' involvement increased their ability to deal with those cultural differences as the Jordanian volunteer states :

“It was very beneficial because like for me, I'm picky social person, but I had the chance to discover myself more. I had the chance to know that I'm very good with dealing with people from different cultures. My roommates were from Italy and Ukraine, and I met a girl from Tunis. I never met anyone from Tunis. Yes, they are Arabs, but they are very different and even the language. I mean they speak Arabic but different accents. So we spoken English all the time, because We didn't understand each other accents. And it was very great to me, like if I have the chance to do it again, I would definitely do.”-GEGED-JO-30-F

Furthermore, volunteering opportunities give volunteers a chance to evaluate their life choices and be out of their comfort zone. International volunteering mainly associated with being out of the comfort zone as the learning again aspect of the volunteering in the informal context. The volunteering take her out of her comfort zone, which resulted in different learning experiences such as language, social interaction, and she developed new capacities during her stay as Spanish volunteer reflects in following statement.

“It was positive and beneficial for me because I lived unique experience in a personal and also in a professional way. Because when you are out of your comfort zone. You develop and a lot of capacities that you are not aware of them. In terms of surviving, in terms of language, social

interaction. I think this everyone has should have the opportunity to do that”.-GAP-ES-30-F

As a result, it can be argued that the volunteering process created an impact upon the volunteers by just being in a spot to reach out the networks of INGOs, to have an experience in the field or having an experience in abroad as a part of the mobility project. These show that the volunteers involved in the program directly gained some benefits during the implementation as it is previously discussed in “Activities” section.

5.4.2. Involvement in Education and Employment

The volunteers are predominantly involved in different activities in their local community as volunteers or involved more in the civil society through diverse activities or become mentors, coordinators, or project managers within Erasmus+ / ESC Programs. This situation reflects that their involvement in EVS/ESC impacted their further participation as the program aims to do so. As explained before, the volunteers' motivation often focuses on increasing their employability or having a practical experience aligning with their studies, try out their skills or gain new skills that they can use during their daily life. The statement of the Portuguese volunteer below reflects this issue concerning the employability aspect.

“That like you mean having those two months in my curriculum, like to find a job... it shows..... I have the ability of just going without any fears to a place like to unknown place and to challenge myself and I think that's a good skill. So I think companies They care a lot about about seeing those two months in my curriculum.” – GEGED-PT-23-F

As the volunteer reflected that having abroad experience in curriculum changes her chances of landing on a job as the employers consider this experience positively. For example the situation of the Italian volunteer who works currently in Turkey as a trainee, the volunteer had found out the contact of the organization through his

informal channels illustrates that even being in a spot helps the volunteer to involve in the further employment as a follow-up of his voluntary service.

“Because first of all, as you can see I'm working here.By the way, in this Syrian organization. But still of course and getting more and more closer to the Syrian issue. Related issues related to the Syrian conflict. And so even if I'm not an officer, let's say in this organization for service. It's putting me closer to the to the field of work. I would like to work in in the future, so for sure it has a direct in employment affect on my life. -GEGED-IT-23-M

Alternatively, concerning the employment for the most of the volunteers, the idea of the activities and their impact upon them were the question due to ambiguity or the lack of post-follow-up of their changes that they could not put into words or clearly explain. Although, it was clear that the skills concerning the education have been gained in both organizations GAP and GEGED as most of the activities provided by the volunteers were consisted of teaching English or other languages. The Italian volunteer who had studied Turkish reflected as following :

“...for education for sure, not just because I studied Turkish, so like. But also because of the skills that you gain in general, I think. Then it depends from on the kind of activity you do as a volunteering ... I was working with the education.... I got some like I don't want to say teaching skills,,The organization, the teamwork. ... this for sure is super helpful, and. like deeper issues. I don't know how to say like maturity and these kind of things.-GEGED-IT-23-F

The volunteers' main aim whose studies intersects with the area of migration such as law or international relations or political science, indicated that the experience was beneficial, and it might create an impact on the long-run in their professional life. This situation is reflected in following statements.

“I did not yet succeed in working in international organizations. I think partly because of the pandemic we have like to shine ourselves into look like our paths that were completely random sometimes. ... I always mention my volunteering and it keeps it the employers interested. it also shows that I am not afraid of challenges to have been volunteering and it also catches their eye that it was in such a specific place. So the such a different place it shows like my eagerness to learn. And my receptivity towards other cultures in curiosity.” -GEGED-PT-23-FB

Arguably, due to Covid-19 pandemic and short time difference (1-2 years) after their volunteering experiences, it can be argued that the volunteers could not directly see the impact of the volunteering in their employment process. But, concerning the employment of some volunteers, this impact was visible due to their experiences.

“Yes, I think it would. I think it already helped me to improve my career. Yes, I think so. And it was one of the reasons talking about the reasons ... why I took this project because I really believe that it could be a plus, not only my personal life and my professional life, I wasn't mistaken.”-GAP-ES-30-F

As it was elaborated before, employers consider volunteering positively during the recruitment. The volunteering experiences, being exposed to different cultures, and involvement in activities as a volunteer; helped the volunteers become involved in the job market as seen from the Jordanian and Moroccan volunteers' experiences. The governmental and private business considered the volunteering experiences as an added value during the employment process as it is reflected in the volunteers' following statements.

“It did add value. Actually. When like I lost my job after I came back to Jordan when I was applying to jobs. One of the jobs they accepted me just

because I did the volunteering and especially volunteering abroad in dealing with other culture. It had to do with my role in the work. Because they think the volunteering is like a very good thing like you can deal with many problems if you already have an experience with volunteering abroad specially.”-GEGED-JO-30-F

“I'm hired for The Minister of Education to work as an English teacher with them and I remember during the oral interview they were also very fascinated about my experience abroad. I don't think there is any an employer that wouldn't be impressed if you mentioned to them that you worked somewhere else beyond your country. – GAP-MA-26-M

On the other hand, even this impact is invisible as Romanian volunteer states that the volunteering changed her. It is arguable that the communication between the volunteers helped them to develop a perspective regarding education and employment and shape their life as it is reflected in the statement of the Romanian volunteer.

“Yeah, I think it. It actually did. Because I also had the examples of the other volunteers that were there... this process of sharing our lives and our purposes. We were talking about employment and education and everything in it really helps you to see how other people are doing and how it is in other countries and the way it works. And it makes you think more about what you can and what you should do.”-GEGED-RO-20-F

Ultimately, it is clear that volunteering had an added value on the life of the volunteers in regard to employment and education. On the other hand, as in next chapter, in some cases the volunteers took new initiatives from the knowledge that they have gained during their experiences and continue to involve in the program as professional in other words as a project coordinator or mentor.

5.4.3. Involvement in Civil Society

After their involvement in EVS/ESC, the volunteers continued to involve in the civil society in their community or their participation in volunteering is increase more than before. In addition to that among all volunteers, the volunteer from Hungary established an NGO in Hungary after her return as she reflected that the volunteering experience in had an impact on her to take this initiative.

“Yes, of course, because of this experience I established my own and start to working with European projects. Of course.”-GAP-HU-32-F

It shows that the experiences during the volunteering lead the young people to be involved in civil society more and in some cases, this involvement evolved into a career. Furthermore, the volunteering and involvement to CSOs are in the high level where the sending organization was the main point of the information for the volunteers to find out the opportunity as in the case of Tunisian volunteer as he states as follows:

“...When I return to Tunisia, they give they give me in details what they what I'm supposed to do. Like after the two weeks quarantine, they told me that I can meet our current volunteers here in Tunisia and I can manage to create activities, even, invest a bit of time to create new strategies to develop activities. Even I get into situation even more, for that I am a mentor now in my sending organization.”-GEGED-TN-22-M

In addition to that, EVS/ESC impacted on the previous volunteering experiences of the volunteers. As the volunteer had restraints due to being in different country, in different environment than usual environment, the volunteers become more aware about their capabilities to do activities in their own country. The Romanian volunteer reflects that situation as the experience in Turkey enabled her to do more activities with his volunteering group in Turkey and gave more motivation to act towards the volunteering.

“... I'm going to continue with the volunteering, um. Anytime I have an opportunity to get involved in something I'm into it and I think also this experience helped me to realize, I enjoy ... this kind of activities. And I think it's a motivation for me remembering what I was doing there and how much, how many things you can do with some strangers and thinking that here with people that I already know I can do even more than that. This is exactly the motivation that I need to keep going.”-GEGED-RO-20-F

The short-term volunteering opportunities are generally for the young people with fewer opportunities or the young people who are not able to devote more time to the program or even to make them try out the short-term volunteering before involving to long-term volunteering to see the structure, activities and the idea of international volunteering. These situation stated in the following statements of the Italian and Moroccan volunteers.

“It fostered my willingness to participate to more in volunteering, so I that's why I would like when I finish my study to do another EVS and to do the long term EVS, and so I think that this also creates an impact in my life because it's like kind of influence in my life choices”-GEGED-IT-24-F

“.. I came back I had to complete my studies Now after I got my BA ...I'm still looking for other opportunities. If I get another opportunity and also I wish to come back to Urfa if I had an opportunity to come back to Urfa, I will go, I will. I will definitely do it because I had a lot of friends and I made a lot of memories in there andd I would love to go back.- GAP-MA-25-M

Arguably, the volunteers' statement reflected that the EVS/ESC increased their participation while changing their attitude towards volunteering positively. Furthermore, the volunteers developed network which could help them to involve in employment, education or even new volunteering opportunities due to their

engagement with the other volunteers from different countries and the NGOs that that have involved during their stay.

5.4.4. Suggestions from volunteers to others on EVS/ESC

To elaborate profoundly the impact and the changes on the volunteers, they were asked to describe how would they suggest this experience to the others. In regard to that, majority of the volunteers considered EVS/ESC as a life-changing experience. Within their suggestion, it can be easily seen that the volunteers should be involved in the activities that are more suitable to their ideas, knowledge, and experiences. On the other hand, the age issue is generally touched upon. By the volunteers. Regarding to age strata of the program, the Hungarian volunteer's following statement reflects that the young people should involve in early ages to benefit from the programs that are provided for them as her first experience was when she was 25.

“I advise to everyone because it's a life changing experience....If you are choosing the project for yourself the suitable one, it can be really good and beneficial for your personal development and. Like for people who are around 20 years old or after the University or before the University, they can have experienced with living alone, living out of the family. So for them it's even much more impact than because I was almost 30 years old. When I mean I think so it wasn't this kind of things that living alone wasn't a new surprise for me.”-GAP-HU-32-F

On the other hand, some of the volunteers acted as multipliers as they reflected below. Moroccan volunteer elaborated that he was discussing about his experience in positive manner with his friend before our interview while other volunteer already acted as a multiplier and involved other volunteers to the program from his own country. Both volunteers have been eager to act as a multiplier due to their positive experiences in GAP YA.

“Like my roommate, Yesterday I was just we were watching the pictures of my experience in Turkey by coincidence because I've seen your email and I was like I'm having a call tomorrow with a friend who would like to ask me about my experience and I was showing him the pictures and I said maybe after the pandemic is over. Or maybe if there is a chance I would apply for a long term project and he was like wow. Long term at this, uh, like at once I was like yeah, I'm excited for it and he's become really interested in the program.”-GAP-MA-21-M

“I'm not sure if you are familiar with all the volunteers, but after me and [GAP-MA-21-M], Moroccan volunteers were two girls, [volunteer in GAP] and [volunteer in GAP] mean knowing. All these names only shows that how I'm still connected to all the project. And Nargis was a member with me in AISEC she was selected to come to Turkey. She was selected to come after me. She was the next volunteer from Morocco after me and she was scared and everything. It was me who was convincing her encouraging her I can suggest to anyone that it's worth it.” – GAP-MA-26-M

The visibility issue is often discussed by the volunteers and touched upon in the evaluation reports. To promote the program and increase the visibility of the opportunities, the volunteers becoming multipliers contributes the increase of the visibility. Additionally, It helps the program reach out to more volunteers who might not be abroad. On the other hand, one of the volunteers set criteria for being volunteers during the interview by explaining the issue of voluntourism. Even though, it is not the concern of this study, voluntourism is often described as a volunteering activity for the sake of tourism. As the volunteer states that the mindset as she describes shows the fact that for the learning, the volunteer has to have distinctive open mindset and able to adapt the situations as derived from the difference between the cultures or the community that volunteer involves.

“I think yes. I would suggest this experience to anyone, but I think you need to be somehow open minded. I think taking this kind of adventures or this kind of activities to volunteer is it's something that needs commitment and that you have to be responsible, it is not something that you're just going on a trip and I think you have to be open minded because. It depends a lot. The place that you're going to be there you're going to be staying. You really want to learn from the experience. I think it is important to not judge by the things that you know. Like I like if I would have gone there with really like closed Spanish mindset. I wouldn't have learned anything because I would have been just judging the whole situation and the whole environment and the people. So I think it is important to be open minded and to really think that you're going somewhere to learn something.”GAP-ES-25-F

Furthermore, the volunteers had doubts before their involvement in the volunteering activity. However, it could have been overcome easily as it is previously discussed by providing information from the other volunteer as the volunteer states. On the other hand, the Spanish volunteer defined the experience as an enriching one precisely due to regions geographical proximity of the place with Syria and the organization's connection with the local community.

Of course I, I suggested this space, specially if you are younger than me. Why? Because I told you before. It's a holistic experience. And not only because it is Turkey.you have the opportunity to go to leave abroad, take it an if it's related with you are with your area take it. The project is in Urfa is a project with soul with heart. Also, I say as I told you, it's a project that gives you the possibility to be a proactive person in all kind of terms. You are going to live in very close to Syria, blah blah blah is not so dangerous. It gives you another perspective of the life. Yeah, and you're aware of the resilience of the people you are aware of everyone is the same even if we come from different cultures. So maybe it's it's not the same to be a volunteer in Germany or France or Belgium. Turkey is different. But for

that reason, I would recommend that because it is possible to go beyond that. – GAP-ES-30-F

The volunteering often helps the volunteers to realize the issues that they are not visible in their society. It is particularly stated by the volunteers through the interviews concerning Syrian crisis as well as Turkish culture. That reflected in the Romanian volunteer's statement as follows :

“I think it's just incredible because you find there some people that can really just change the way of thinking and they can help you to see some something that you didn't even realize there that they were there. And it's also if you don't. If some people are not really into this bonding with people and you can just tell them that at least you can go to a new place. There is a different environment for you it is a really great opportunity because you can take advantage of it however you want. So it's your choice how you how you do it, how you want to experience it. Every time, I'm telling them about my personal experience, which I think it's more relevant than anything else”.-GEGED-RO-20-F

Ultimately, the Bosnian volunteers' experiences validate the concern of all volunteering activities in Turkey, as majority of the travel advice provided by EU member states declare that going to South-East Turkey is highly dangerous and it is not suggested for the foreigners unless it is an official business. Although, the experience of the volunteer was different from the travel advice as she explains the following :

“Firstly, I'm saying for this area...traveling and this area because then you go on Internet then you go your government sites. You could see that everyone is not suggesting you to go East of Turkey, especially Urfa ... I was really felt really safe and you can see that it's nothing like that our government is suggesting. Um, first of that second of it,...The place was

really amazing, the food, culture. You can see a lot of things like me as an example I traveled all the time Istanbul, and I'm regretting so much that I didn't try other cities in Turkey, especially those East cities. They are amazing. You can see so much cultural, but for the point of the of learning you can really learn a lot from it.”-GAP-BA-26-F

As the suggestions from the volunteers, it can be seen that project-specific experiences such as working with refugees, having a community of volunteers along with the geographical proximity of the place to the Syrian crisis have been the main aspects of the volunteers' involvement and the base of their suggestions to the future volunteers. On the other hand, it is worth to emphasize that the participation of young people such as youth exchanges or long-term volunteering after short-term EVS/ESC programs is the promoted practice by the European youth programs along with becoming a multiplier within the program. As it was argued before, in that sense the volunteers' participation to new programs and projects was promoted through their volunteering in GAP YA and GEGED.

5.4.5. Communication with sending and hosting organization

Before the interviews, I communicated with GAP YA and GEGED and requested them to send e-mail to volunteers for them to involve in the study. Admittedly, the criticism towards study might be that the volunteers involved were the young people who had still in contact with the hosting organizations and they had good experiences. On the contrary, the majority of the volunteers did not have ongoing communication with their hosting organizations not even their sending organizations expect than some volunteers like in the case of Jordanian volunteer who were supposed to involve in another youth program through her sending organization as she states following :

“I have a communication with my sending an organization we have like I had a chance to go to Poland for training, but it was in March and our airport closed that time. But I still have a communication with them, but

*right now we don't have any volunteering projects because of Covid.”-
GEGED-JO-30-F*

The sending organizations keep the contact in a low-level with volunteers after their return or they do not contact with them at all. The volunteers' reflection towards this situation was *“They didn't need us, so they didn't communicate with us”*. The role of the sending organization is to follow-up with the volunteers after their return. Even though, the sending organizations do not need them to volunteer in their organization. Arguably, the role of sending organizations should be more clearly defined and the sending organizations should be more supported to increase the involvement of the volunteer after their volunteering period.

“Yes, so they contacted me to ask how was the experience and to do a survey as well and then I think they asked me if I was available to share my experience with other future volunteers, but I think they never contacted me know that as far as I remember...So probably they didn't....”-GEGED-IT-24-F

It can be said that rather than sharing an experience or the communication with the volunteers about their experience, the sending organizations visibility in the volunteers' follow-up processes is highly low as it is reflected in the case of the Italian volunteer. The reason behind this practice varies but the main issue is the funding or it can be as well the unavailability of the volunteer to involve in the activities as Lithuanian volunteer describes below.

“Like communication, no like with the sending institution and no, because as I said they invited me know to participate in that conference. You know, for ex volunteers to share their experience, but I couldn't join it because I was already in Sicily.”- GEGED-LT-28-F

Usually, the sending organization is in different city than the city of the volunteer. That impacts the participation of the volunteer in the activities of the sending organizations. Thus, the follow-up occurs through blog posts requested from the volunteer about the volunteering experiences or e-mails or reports.

“ I'm afraid no. I received only one email. Oh, I don't remember exactly with something like to share something on a blog or maybe, or write about your experience. ... But other than that no.”-GAP-MA-26-M

“I didn't have a just normal thing to say I am right and everything went OK and after that I didn't have any communication with GAP or my sending organization.”-GAP-BA-26-F

Another practice shows that the volunteers involve directly as a multiplier as it is explained above under *“Suggestions from volunteers to others on EVS/ESC”* section in regard to the volunteers acting as multipliers of the program impacts on the visibility and the outreach of the program.

Ultimately, the sending organizations' role is clearly defined in the QL structure as they are suggested to involve the volunteers to the activities taking place within their organization to promote the program as well as help the volunteers to re-integrate in their society. In this context, only experience of the one volunteer was aligned with the QL structure. Admittedly, the sending organizations' role is mainly to communicate with the volunteers after their return to help them about their future involvement to civil society, employment and education but due to Covid-19 period since 2020 March, these activities might not be carried out, and the reason behind this situation arguably could be the effect of the pandemic.

6. CONCLUSION

Since Turkey's involvement to EU Programmes, Turkey has been receiving volunteers from all around the world through Youth for Europe, YOUTH, YiA, Erasmus+ and ultimately ESC Programmes. Even though, the relevant statistics and studies illustrate that Turkey send volunteers more than receives them. With the Syrian crisis and increased INGO presence in South-East Turkey, the region became well-known among the young people due to become closer to the Syrian crisis or have a field experience which might help them to get a job in humanitarian aid or development sector because of increased job opportunities in the field of humanitarian aid. Thus, the volunteers had particular experiences and profile in comparison to general international volunteer profile and EVS/ESC concerning the literature developed within the other international volunteering programs. In this research, I tried to analyse the experiences of the volunteers through their own statements and reflections as a practitioner of the program who involved in European Youth Programmes as volunteer and as professional for the activities taking place in different countries.

The profile of the volunteers consisted of mainly the university students or the university graduates who were willing to implement their theoretical knowledge and have an experience in the field. Moreover, in contrary to the general overview of the volunteer profile in the impact studies (Brandenburg, 2017; Haski-Leventhal, et al., 2008; Sherraden et al., 2008; Holdsworth, 2010) concerning EVS/ESC or international volunteering, the majority of the volunteers were coming from middle income families. Although, the general profile in literature refers that the volunteers tend to be coming from high income families. The reason behind it might be that the volunteering opportunity provided had been short-term rather than long-term activities as the short-term activities focus on the participation of young people with fewer opportunities.

During the interviews, the volunteers predominantly indicated their reason to be involved in the organisations' activities as to be able to see, practice and have an

experience regarding to the refugee issues. Although the motivation and reasoning between the North African and European volunteers differed, the North African's choice of coming to Turkey was the cultural similarity. As they had a perspective that Turkey was up to some level culturally similar to their countries and they would feel more at home. Furthermore, the other primary motivation of volunteers had been helping others and learning while helping others as it is the general tendency when we examine the motivation within the international volunteering context (Lough, 2014; Geudens, et al. 2013; Brandenburg, 2017; Dekker & Halman, 2003). On the other hand, the volunteers were highly regarded the interculturality of the organizations specifically GEGED due to huge amount of the volunteers. Therefore, It can be said that the primary tool for the learning for the volunteers was the volunteer community. Even though, the number of volunteers within the same organization did not discussed in the international volunteering, it boosts the volunteers' learning experiences and fosters their involvement. When we compare the volunteers' experiences in GAP and GEGED, that is remarkably visible among the statements of the volunteers as they indicate several times that their relation with each other increased their understanding towards culture of the other and provided a space for them learn from each other.

All volunteers regardless of age, gender, organization or country of origin, stated that the motivation is more important than the skill to involve in volunteering because the necessary skills can be gained during the course of volunteering. That perspective aligns with the literature written on international volunteering (Holdsworth, 2010; Sherraden, Lough, & McBride, 2008) and the idea of EVS/ESC (Brandenburg, 2017; EACEA, 2019). On the other hand, it can be said that the volunteers' motivation to be involved in the activities has been the skill acquirement or to increase their social capital or fill the gap between the studies and the labour market. In this regard, the volunteers' involvement in both organizations can be considered the same from the volunteers' statements.

Concerning the role of organizations, it can be said that from the volunteering experiences, in general, the sending organizations working with both organizations (GAP and GEGED) have been unsuccessful neither supporting the volunteers nor preparing them to the cultural issues concerning preparation. Furthermore, it can be said that concerning the after volunteering perspective likewise before volunteering, the sending organizations were unsuccessful on reintegrating the volunteers to the society or providing different opportunities to the volunteer to keep them involved as the analysis confirms. In this regard, as a suggestion to both organizations that they should evaluate their relationships or develop new partnerships.

It is crystal clear that due to different interactions of the volunteers such as volunteer to volunteer, volunteer to beneficiaries, volunteer to the local community; the cultural awareness concerning the European or the local community culture is increased among the volunteers. Arguably, the volunteers did not develop any negative cultural or personal thoughts towards the others; the conflicts were part of their daily lives as the volunteers reflected it during the interviews.

Furthermore, the volunteers' active citizenship and autonomy were supported through the activities within hosting organizations. As the volunteers had an opportunity to choose among the activities allowed the volunteers to be involved in any activity that they consider fit and they like. It can be argued that it increased the volunteers' engagement and keep their motivation at the same level during their stay. In addition to that, the volunteers as they had a space to initiate their own ideas in the organizations even develop new cooperation with other organizations helped both ways while increasing the capacity of the host organizations, it as well increased the involvement of the volunteer as the volunteers considered themselves as valued and their ideas as deemed valid. Concerning the autonomy, the volunteers have indicated that they have been in several situations due to language barriers, the cultural differences, the misunderstandings. Even in some cases that the volunteering time was their first time abroad; they overcame those challenges by

developing new skills during their stay in South-East Turkey. It can be argued that that help them to develop self-confidence as well as self-resilience towards the challenging situations.

There are two characteristic findings of this study comparing the international volunteering literature and the studies done previously in the field. It is the free-space policy of both organizations. This practice promotes the volunteers' engagement high level and increased the sense of belonging to the organization among the volunteers. Furthermore, it increased the volunteers' engagement, keep their motivation up and increase their sense of initiative which is one of the EVS/ESC's main features. Moreover, The volunteer to volunteer interaction raised cultural awareness among the volunteers in both organizations due to number of the volunteers. Thus, it can be argued that as the heterogeneity of the volunteers' country of origin increases, the volunteers' cultural awareness does parallelly.

Ultimately, It can be said that the volunteers' experiences increased their involvement in the civil society, education or employment. As most of their reasoning was to see what is to work in humanitarian aid or development field and decide about their life choices. Thus, it is clear that their volunteering process helps them in this regard. On the other hand, the volunteers have gained perspective about the issues, primarily the issue of Syrian refugees during their stay through their interactions and the structures of the activities.

In conclusion, the volunteers' experiences show the fact that the program aims were achieved through the activities provided by GEGED and GAP YA. Although, the sending organizations' relation and their partnerships should be reconsidered as that the work of the sending organizations concerning the quality mechanisms within the program is relatively low. Additionally, it can be argued that the local partnerships of the hosting organizations enriched the experiences of the volunteers and provided wide-range of activities. Although, one recommendation for the hosting organizations could be that they can evolve their activities beyond the

educational activities or the social work as most of the volunteers have indicated that the activities provided were not suitable with their skills or knowledge.

The shortcomings of this research are varied. The study only focuses on the volunteers' experiences and excludes the local community, sending organizations and staff of the hosting organizations. It could be widened by involving the organisation's staff, representatives of sending organizations and the people who directly benefited from the volunteers' activities. Another limitation of the study is the language. As a researcher, I was able to conduct the interviews online and only possibility was doing the interviews in English. Thus, the research sampling consisted of volunteers whose English language ability was enough to express themselves. Therefore, the volunteers who couldn't speak English were excluded from this study. The study was planned to reach the volunteers involved from 2015 until 2020. The volunteers were sent an invitation to involve in the study, only the volunteers involved after 2018 were shown interest to involve in the study.

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ANNEX-A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is volunteering for you? How do you define volunteering?
2. What was the main reason for you to involve in EVS?
3. Why did you select this specific organization GAP/GEGED?
4. Have you ever been in Turkey before your volunteering?
5. Did you involve any European Union Program (Erasmus+ or Youth) before your volunteering experience? If yes, can you explain to me a bit
6. How was your sending organization support? Do you think you felt supported? If yes/no, Why?
7. Do you consider yourself as young people with fewer opportunity?
8. What do you think about the generally regarding EVS/ESC?
9. Did you feel supported in your host organization? Tell me a bit about your relationship with the mentor, supervisor and your coordinator
10. What activities did you involve in the host organization?
11. How was your relationship with the beneficiaries, local community and other volunteers?
12. Do you think EVS/ESC was beneficial to you?
13. Does the financial support with the EVS/ESC was enough for you?
14. Did you feel that you have a responsibility within the organization to do activities?
15. Do you think this experience helped you to develop cultural awareness and autonomy? Why?
16. How was your experience with the refugees?
17. Did you receive support from your sending organization after your return?
18. Do you communicate with your hosting organization and the other volunteers?
19. Would you suggest your experience to any other young person? If yes/no, why?
20. Do you have any experience that the volunteering experience increased your involvement in education or employment?
21. Are you still involved in NGOs? If yes, can you explain a bit about it? Do you think that your involvement in volunteering had an impact on it?

ANNEX-B: POST-INTERVIEW SURVEY

1. Organization

- GAP
- GEGED

2. Country

- Morocco
- Lithuania
- Portugal
- Romania
- Spain
- Tunisia
- Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Italy
- Jordan
- Hungary

3. Birth Year

4. Year Participated to EVS

- 2018
- 2019
- 2020

5. Duration of EVS (as number of months)

6. Education Level prior to EVS

- High School
- Associate Degree / Vocational Education
- Undergraduate
- Graduate or Higher

7. Current Education Level

- High School
- Associate Degree / Vocational Education
- Undergraduate
- Graduate or Higher

8. Education Level of Your Mother

- Illiterate

- Primary / Middle School
- High School
- Associate Degree / Vocational Education
- Undergraduate
- Graduate or Higher

9. Education Level of Your Father

- Illiterate
- Primary / Middle School
- High School
- Associate Degree / Vocational Education
- Undergraduate
- Graduate or Higher

10. Income Level (Judge yourself according reality of your country)

- Low Income Level
- Middle Income Level
- High Income Level

11. Prior Employment Status to EVS/ESC

- Unemployed
- Temporary Job
- Part-Time Job
- Full-Time Job

12. Current Employment Status

- Unemployed
- Temporary Job
- Part-Time Job
- Full-Time Job

13. Do you consider yourself as young people with fewer opportunities during the time you started volunteering?

- Yes
- No

14. I give consent for the usage of the information of this interview without revealing my identity or the information.

- Yes
- No