



How to use your EVS to make a difference?

When you go abroad and get into your project as a volunteer, you will have a lot of freedom to express yourself and try out new things. For me, it was really important to use my volunteer work to share the things I am very passionate about. One of them is sustainability and our responsibility for the environment. So I want to share how I actually changed other peoples' approach to sustainability and the environment as an EVS volunteer.

What can you learn out of it? Most importantly, that if something matters to you and you show initiative, you can inspire people as a volunteer. So, let's get into the step-by-step guide to "How to make a difference in your EVS"!

Step 1 – Find something that's important to you

This one should be easy. You're a young person, full of dreams, hopes and energy. So, what does your heart beat for?

In my case, as I said this was sustainability and responsibility for the environment.

Step 2 – Find your target group

So, who do you want to share your passion with? Where in your project could it fit in? Here you'll have to get a little more creative. But usually your projects should be very supportive in helping you find a way to bring your interest into your work. If you show initiative and are motivated to do something, no one will stop you. Find out if it should be a workshop or a presentation, a trip, a video, ... The possibilities are endless. And don't be afraid to ask for support on the way.

As I worked as a German teacher at a Danish boarding school I quickly knew that I wanted to do a project with my 10th grade German class. It should take 3 weeks and should be very practical. My mentor right away was very supportive and just let me take over the class for the next few weeks.

Step 3 – Make it relevant and practical

By now you'll fully be into the project and ideas will just keep coming. As you plan your workshop or whatever you decide to do, remember to make it as practical and as relevant for your target group as possible. Try to think of new and fun ways to bring across the information you want to share. Create a game or a competition to keep your audience active!

In my German class we learned about different aspects of sustainability (plastic, general consumption, animal agriculture, fast-fashion) and discussed them. The main focus was on our own responsibilities towards the environment, trying to link our actions to the consequences instead of feeling like one person's decisions don't make a difference. In the end the students defined their personal sustainability challenge they would try to live by for a week. Most people went vegetarian for a week, some also reduced plastic or tried saving water. The challenge definitely opened up a dialogue about sustainability for the whole school. Students had a great interest in the topic and students from other classes would join the challenge. And that, for me, was the best part of it!

Step 4 – See the Results and be proud of yourself

You'll be surprised by the positive feedback you'll get. Maybe that little one-time project will actually develop into something much bigger than you first thought... Still, you will have learned a ton of skills along the way! So be proud of yourself!

In my project, some found out that they could not easily live like in the challenge completely, but many said that they definitely rethink their consumption. There are now 7 permanent vegetarians, just in my 10th grade German class. Over the whole school there is 24 vegetarians and a vegetarian day for everyone, every second week.

I hope my experience will inspire some of you to use your EVS to really get out there and try to make a difference, big or small.

Take care and have a great time!

Elisa