Learning (to learn) in EVS

A self-reflection and learning tool

Name:

Dear EVS volunteer,

As you might already know EVS is very much about learning – non-formal and informal. It is about acquiring new life experiences, but also gaining new **competences** – getting new *knowledge*, improving *skills* and developing *attitudes*. You may really learn a lot in EVS! But in order to learn effectively and efficiently and to use the maximum potentials for learning you might need to ACT as a real – **self-directed learner**.

Of course, we were not born as self-directed learners. It is an attitude one can develop or not. But, what does this concept mean in practice?

The self-directed learner is a person who made a choice to be a "lifelong learner", who wants to have an accurate **self-awareness** of strengths and weaknesses, who wishes to take **responsibility for his/her learning process** and actively searches for learning opportunities. The self-directed learner is aware of his/her learning needs and sets **learning objectives** accordingly. The person develops a **learning plan** which brings learning ambitions down to earth and helps **self-assessment** of learning outcomes (i.e. achievement of learning objectives). Finally, the person **reflects on the learning process** and is aware of the preferred learning styles. While doing this, the self-directed learner knows how to benefit from the **feedback and dialogue** with the others (e.g. mentor or other EVS volunteers).
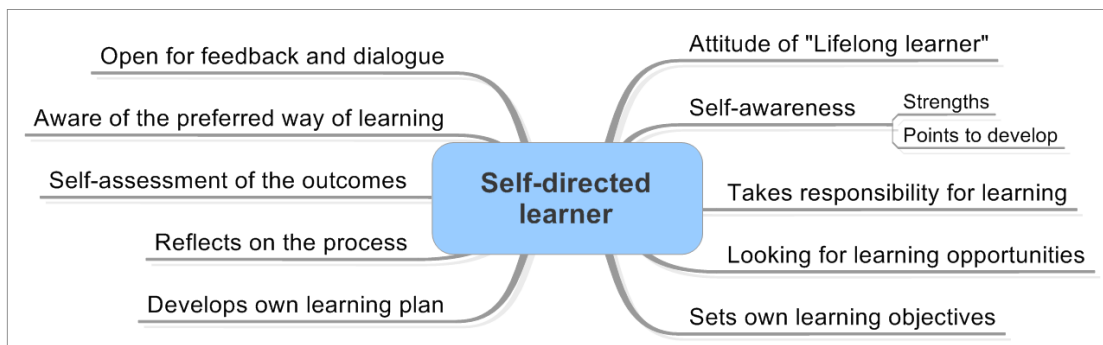
Wow! Sounds too theoretical? Too difficult? Or perhaps, easy? Anyway, the most effective way to really understand self-directed learning is to practice it yourself!

So, we invite you to take a challenge and to participate in this "experiment" and see how it feels to **be a self-directed learner during your EVS.**
If you are ready to take the challenge, you may wish to go to the page 2...

Congratulations!

We are very happy that you have made the decision to take this challenge :)
Let's go step by step...

A. Learning needs, expectations and competences
In the beginning it is important that you clarify your own **learning needs and expectations towards EVS**. So, when you think about your EVS in general, what are the things that you expect to learn, to gain for yourself? WRITE these down:

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Or you may prefer to DRAW what are you passionate about to learn in your EVS?

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Now, try to think in terms of COMPETENCES (knowledge, skills and attitudes) would you like to develop during your EVS?

What **knowledge** (information, theories, and concepts) would you like to get during your EVS?

What **skills** would you like to improve?

What **attitudes** (personal qualities, awareness, sensitivity) would you like to acquire or develop further?

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B. Learning objectives

Having in mind your learning needs (competences you would like to develop), could you try to phrase these as learning objectives? For example: to increase knowledge about project management, to develop my active listening skills, or to increase my tolerance to ambiguous situations in an intercultural context).

Learning objective 1

Learning objective 2

Learning objective 3

Learning objective 4

Learning objective 5

Learning objective 6

Tips when setting your learning objectives:
- link them to your learning needs and expectations
- try to be as concrete as possible
- set varied objectives; addressing full range of competences (knowledge, skills, and attitudes)
- make them realistic and achievable
- define both short term and long term objectives
- describe them in positive terms

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C. **Learning plan**

Next step is to create your Learning plan (What, How, with whom, Till when) in form of a table or Mind map or your own EVS Learning Tree or a whatever form you prefer...

What (learning objective)	How	With whom	When

Mind map:

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EVS learning tree[*]:

In each branch you may write a learning objective in relation to:
a. personal development
b. professional development
c. other areas (e.g. personal project during EVS)

Think about the ways what might be the challenges and sources of support in achieving those objectives.

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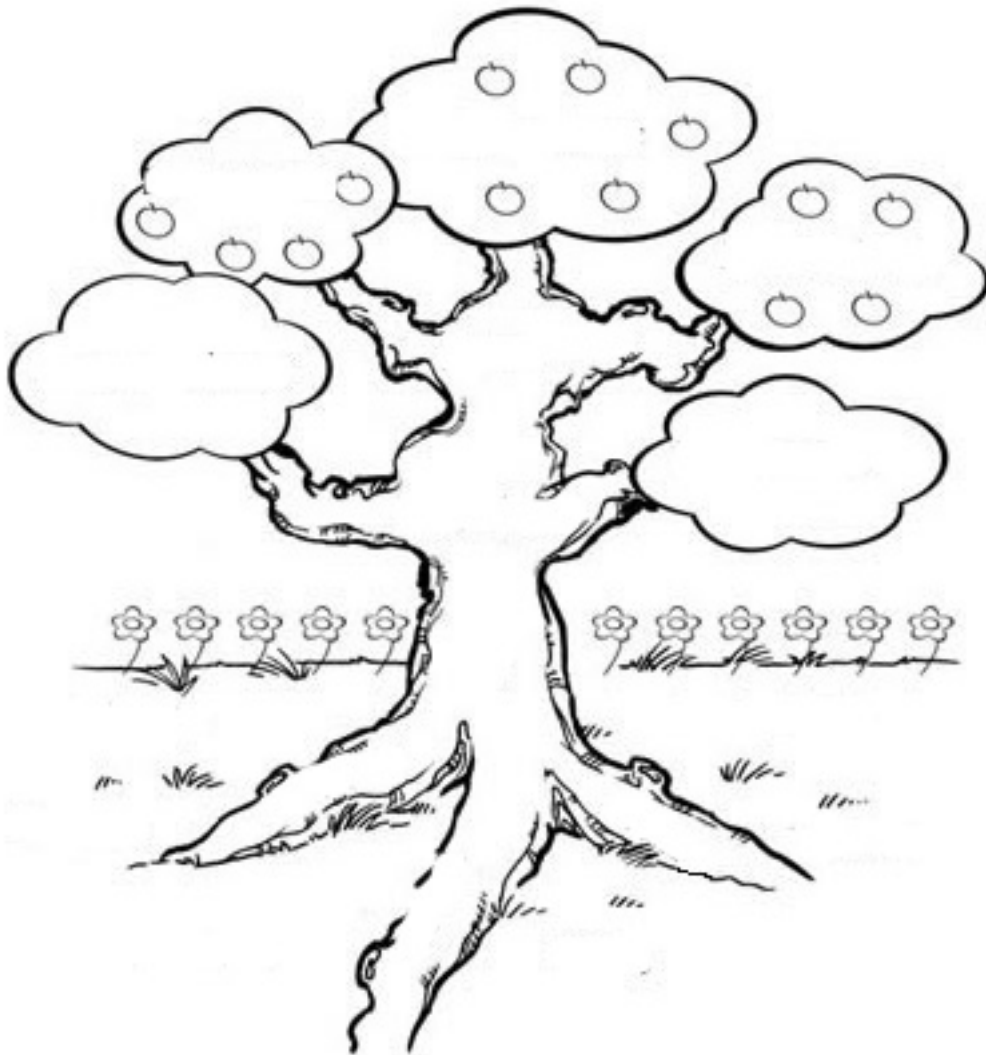
[*] Tip: Use the larger sheet of paper, so you may use it as a poster in your room.

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D. Reflection on your learning process

Now when you have learning objectives and the learning plan, it is time to think HOW you may follow your own learning plan and reflect on the process of learning.
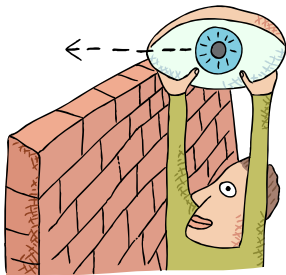
There are certainly different ways which suite different learning preferences. However some good practices of EVS volunteers are:

To keep the LEARNING DIARY where you may record important "learning moments" along the way...

Ask for FEEDBACK from your mentor, other EVS volunteers or any other persons that you may trust.

Take a step aside for a moment and REFLECT on your own WAY(s) of learning:

▸ How do you prefer to learn? What is your learning style?

▸ How do you motivate yourself to learn?

▸ How do you deal with obstacles in learning?

▸ How do you see the role of other people in your own learning process? Do you prefer to learn alone or in a group?

▸ Are you open for feedback or you take it defensively?

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Self-assessment of learning outcomes

Finally, it is time to harvest what you have learnt in your EVS. It is time for self-assessment of your learning outcomes. How to do it?
You might prefer to do it alone only? Or fist alone, and then check it with other people? Maybe feedback from others can help you in a more accurate self-assessment.
Our suggestion is to describe your learning outcomes in relation to your learning objectives, but also including other unexpected learning that might have happened.

During the self-assessment, you may wish to use these unfinished sentences:

I feel more comfortable now...

I found out...

I learned...

I made progress...

Now I am able to...

I know now how...

I developed...

I have clear view now...

Space for self-assessment of your learning outcomes

Gained knowledge and information

Developed and improved Skills

Acquired Attitudes and increased Awareness

Other things...

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F. Key Competences for lifelong learning

In the end your service, you might start to think about filling in the Youthpass. In order to do that (along with someone from your host organization), you will need to "translate" your learning outcomes into the language of Key competences for lifelong learning. In order to make it easier check the tips at Youthpass website how to do it or read the Youthpass guide.
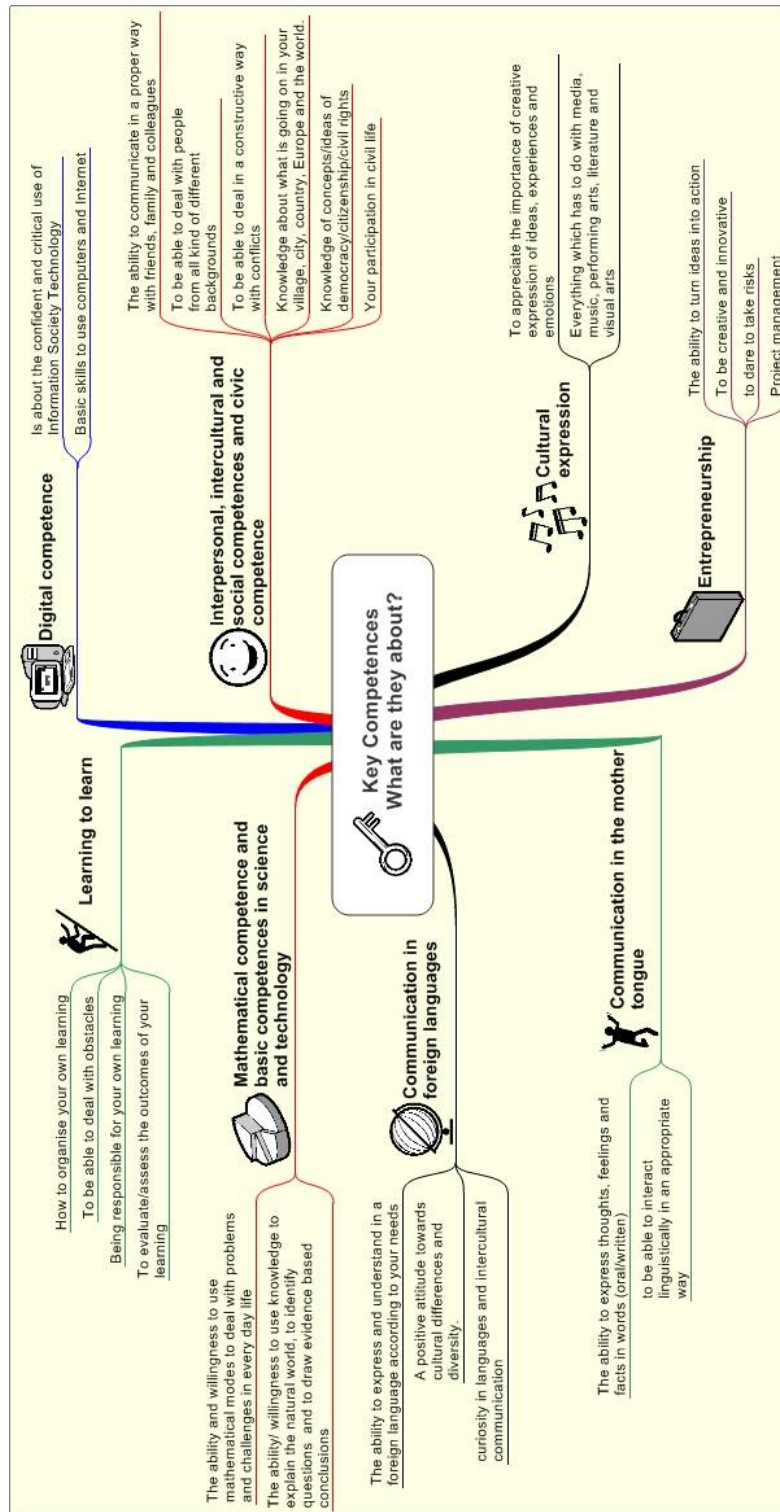
P. Kloosterman on Key Competences for Lifelong learning, for Youthpass Guide, published in 2009.

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Communication in mother tongue

Communication in foreign languages

Mathematical competence and basic competence in science and technology

Digital competence

Learning to learn

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Social and civic competence

Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship

Cultural awareness and expression

Other specific skills

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