

## **How Youthpass can paint your future with bright colours!**

When in June 2015 I decided to embark on EVS, I knew it would be a great experience, but I didn't know it would be such a life-changing period. I like to define it a sort of trampoline, from where, after having climbed to the top and having seen the view, I made my dive. My personal, original, fear-less dive in the future.

My life until that moment followed a precise plan: after high school I moved from the south of Italy to Rome, I studied economics and graduated on time. While studying I was working as a waitress, baby sitting sometimes and doing private math lessons (I don't like to get bored). And then, right after university, I did an internship in an advertising agency for 9 months.

Then, at the beginning of 2015, I decided to give a boost to my life, trying to live abroad: I moved to Nice, following a friend of mine who was going to start her Erasmus. I took my desire to challenge myself, my adaptability and my not so developed French skills and I tried to find a job there. I stayed just 4 months but I managed to baby-sit an Italian kid and then to work as a waitress - in May I decided to come back to Italy with a luggage full of lessons learned, a better knowledge of French and some macarons.

In one of my researches for a job, in Italy or abroad, I read about EVS. It was an article of a girl who explained how EVS helped her and made her a successful woman (she found a good job after it). I found it amazing: ok, I studied economics but I always thought that I don't care about being rich or being a successful manager: I want to have a job I like, the possibility to cultivate my hobbies, my friends and to travel. And EVS seemed the perfect combination.

It's with this spirit that I met Outward Bound Croatia, my amazing hosting organization. I will not talk about all the things I did during my EVS or what it meant to me, but I will try to explain through the youthpass why EVS can boost your future.

I will be completely honest: I have to confess that my biggest concern before choosing EVS was that I would lose time: in this competitive and frenetic world we are convinced that we have to hurry finding a job right after (or during) university, we repeat to ourselves that life is short, that companies don't want people who don't hurry, run, have an impressive CV.

But what does it mean?

Before starting my EVS I was doing interviews, wondering if I could find the ideal job - but the problem wasn't only the job search, but the fact I felt I didn't have MY time. Yes: a time for me, to discover my strengths and opportunities, my desires and needs. And no, there's no vote for this, there's no right age, there's no manual: you have to see your life from a different point of view, reflect on the past, push your boundaries, discover yourself and let your potential come out.

This is something really difficult, that you cannot learn at school or university, where you feel frustrated if you don't have a good vote, if you don't follow the path someone else decided for you. I don't want to say that formal education is not important (we know it is) but that

non-formal education is important as well, making you the owner, the teacher, the student and the judge of yourself.

So, let's quickly follow the youthpass:

**MATHEMATICAL SKILLS:** ok, I have to admit that these are the competences I didn't improve during EVS. I studied in a mathematic-centred high school so let's say that the "I am calculating everyday the change" wasn't a good point.

**COMMUNICATION IN MOTHER TONGUE:** is it possible to improve your mother tongue while abroad? Yes. For two days I was a non-formal Italian teacher in a school and also with other volunteers, and in the effort to explain my language I feel I went deeper in Italian grammar rules and vocabulary, making comparisons with other languages.

**COMMUNICATION IN FOREIGN LANGUAGES:** I always was afraid of speaking English. I studied it for so many years in school but never practiced it enough. For 9 months I spoke English at home, in the office, in the shops and with all people I met, and also with myself and in my dreams. It's useless to say how it's important to speak other languages, but it's worth repeating it and pushing yourself out of your comfort-mother-tongue zone. In my current job, we are 12 people: only 5 are Italians. Our official language is English and you cannot imagine how grateful I am to not have obstacles in the communication.

**DIGITAL COMPETENCES:** during EVS I learned to use Mailchimp, that now I always use during my job. I also improved my social media competences and I learnt to use new graphic programs (I also designed a flyer for a youth exchange – unbelievable!)

**LEARNING TO LEARN:** the most difficult one. But actually it's my favourite: learning to learn is deciding and selecting what you want to learn from all people and experiences. The possibility to learn are endless - during EVS you have to take the best for you. Time is short, challenges, emotions, sources are so many. Having the courage to take risks and decide what is best for you is LEARNING at its best.

**SOCIAL AND CIVIC COMPETENCES:** thanks to EVS I developed the ability to take part to local, national and European initiatives, with groups of people from different background, with different ideas and ways of expressing them.

**SENSE OF INITIATIVE AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP:** thanks to OBC programs I developed a lot my sense of initiative, I overcame a lot of fears and learnt to face different kind of obstacles. In particular I learnt to afford everything with enthusiasm and desire to always do something new and to organize. I told in public and dealt with international groups, I organized workshops and managed activities and when, one month before leaving, I had the possibility to present Outward Bound Croatia during an official event in Zagreb, I found myself more confident and resourceful I could even imagine.

**CULTURAL AWARENESS AND EXPRESSION:** living with people from different cultures in a new country made me more aware about other countries history. In particular, meeting people from all over Europe (and beyond) gave me the opportunity to have a deeper

understanding of European background and to be more attentive and adaptable to the so-called diversity.

In the end, I can totally say that youthpass made me reflect better and evaluate the results of my EVS and it's thanks to these competences, skills and self awareness (and ok, a sip of good luck) that I found a job before finishing my EVS. I started in April 2016 and since then I'm a Marketing Executive in an international company, who help professionals develop their competences in Project, Programme, Portfolio and IT Service Management. Since the beginning of my journey I've been trying to always be open-minded, propositive, creative, adaptable, hard-working and to make every single day in the office a learning moment (from experience, from colleagues, from myself – always applying my learning to learn competences!). **This is the best success for me. University + EVS was my magic potion.**