“My EVS without barriers. A worthy challenge”

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Kamil Goungor
ENIL – European Network on Independent Living
Who am I?

- 29, from Poland but born and live in Athens
- Communication, Media and Culture, at Panteion University, Athens, Greece
- Co-founder of “i-living”, the first Independent Living organization in Greece
- Founder of “The Trawheeler”
- Active volunteer and former EVSer
A few words about **ENIL** and **Onafhankelijk Leven**

- **The European Network on Independent Living**
- **European wide network of disabled people**
- **Forum for independent living organisations and non-disabled allies**
- **Grass roots & cross-disability organisation**
- **Start in Strasbourg 1989 with about 80 persons from 20 countries**
- **Find out more on:** [www.enil.eu](http://www.enil.eu)

- **A non-profit organization for Independent Living in Flanders**
- **Citizens' movement fighting for deinstitutionalization and the self-determination of disabled people who have the right to live independently and to be part of the community.**
- **Wide range of services (advice line, coaches and training)**
- **Find out more on:** [www.onafhankelijkleven.be](http://www.onafhankelijkleven.be)
What is Independent Living?

Dr. Adolf Ratzka: Definition of Independent Living

“Independent Living is having same range of options and same degree of self-determination that people without a disability take for granted.”

ENIL key definitions
http://www.enil.eu/il-definitions/

A. Ratzka on ‘dependency culture’
http://www.independentliving.org/docs7/ratzka20071022.html
What is EVS (European Voluntary Service)?

- It is an international volunteer programme (under the umbrella of Erasmus+) funded by the European Commission. It gives the opportunity to young people (aged 17-30) to work voluntary (full-time) in an organization or in a public body, in a foreign country within or outside the EU, from 2 to 12 months. Technically it is for free.

- It gives you important working experience in a field which interests you
- It is a great learning experience (in many ways)
- You develop yourself and gain practical and social skills essential for your future

- After the EVS, all this experience is formally recognized through a Youthpass certificate (European recognition tool for non-formal and informal learning in youth work)

- Find out more on: http://ec.europa.eu/youth/programme/mobility/european-voluntary-service_en.htm
My responsibilities and tasks

• Communicational and secretarial work (staff meetings, articles, emails, reports, notes, develop survey, social media, collecting data etc)

• Attending, participating and representing ENIL/OL in conferences, meetings and other events

• Speeches and presentations

• Long term assignments
My Belgian experience
Why this EVS is important

• For me, because it was a unforgettable, lifetime and life changing experience

• For others, because it had some special conditions (PA budget and accessibility). Its realization was a positive example to both Europe and disabled people. **It shows that it is possible**
Challenges and barriers

- EVS is inclusive but sometimes only in theory
- Finding PA(s)
- Arranging the budget for PAs and other needs related to disability
- Practical and administrative barriers (before and on the spot)
- The typical barriers every EVSser face
Suggestions / Advices

For EU and NAs:
• Inform about the existing possibilities
• Mainstream disability and include related information in official Erasmus+ guidelines
• Create opportunities

For Organizations:
• Be inclusive
• Don’t be afraid to push and ask for something

For candidates:
• Prepare well, ask questions and state clearly your needs from the very beginning
• Get out of your comfort zone
Thank you for your attention!

Kamil Goungor
kamiloulis@gmail.com