



Annual Report 2010

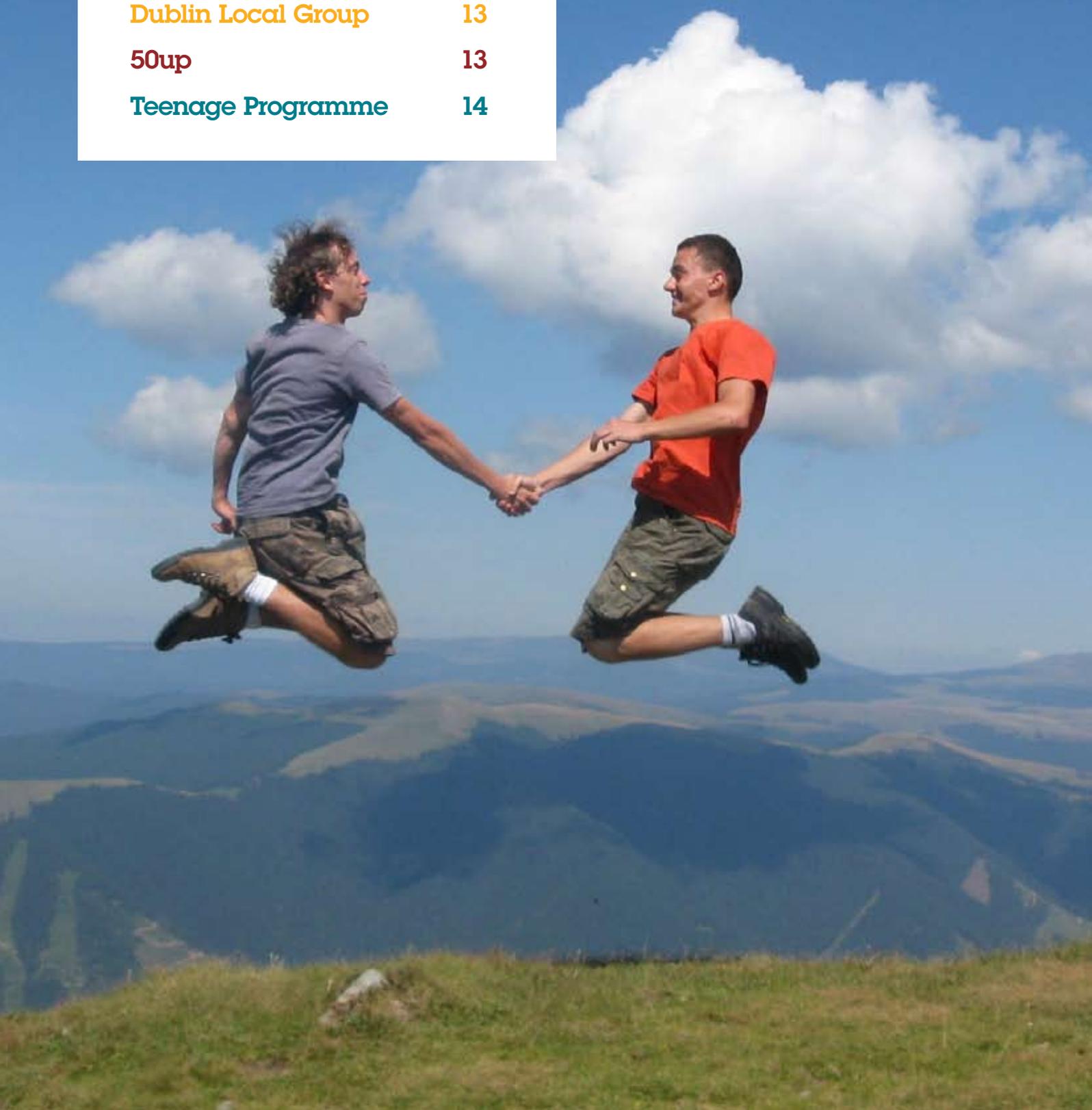


**Voluntary
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Programmes and Groups

International Volunteer Projects Programme (IVP) organises 25 – 30 short term projects of practical benefit to local communities and voluntary groups all over Ireland each year, bringing together volunteers from Ireland and overseas. We place volunteers from Ireland in similar projects in over 50 countries world-wide.

Development Education Programme enables people from Ireland to join in a two month programme of voluntary work in developing countries of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East.

Teenage Programme enables young people who face social exclusion to take part in voluntary work projects in Ireland and in other European countries. The participants are offered opportunities to learn new skills and meet people from different cultures and religions, the young people can learn to recognise and develop their own skills and talents.

Dublin Local Group volunteers help to paint and decorate homes of elderly and marginalised people living in poor housing conditions

Long Term Volunteering enables people to work from 3 -12 months on a variety of voluntary and community projects in Europe and North America.

Staff Team

Tom Ryder - Coordinator

Helen Walmsley - Development Officer,
International Volunteer Projects Programme

Grace Walsh - Teenage Programme Coordinator

Irina Debenjak - EVS Volunteer, Teenage Programme

Margaret Brannigan - Office Administrator

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Fionnuala and Lydia from the Dublin Local Group with the co volunteers at a project in Serbia

National Committee

The 2009 AGM was held in Dublin in late November. Thirty five members were present at the meeting and along with the formal AGM held a series of workshops on VSI priorities for 2010.

The AGM elected a new National Committee (NC). They were –Laura Ni Fhlaibhin, Sorcha Tormey, Sarah Williams, Armin Krautgasser, Deirdre Treacy and Leanne Hyland. We held a planning and development workshop in late February and identified several priorities for the coming years including developing a marketing strategy; financial sustainability; improving internal and external communication.

VSI in 2010

VSI has achieved a huge amount over the past year and there have been many highlights;

- The involvement of 130 volunteers from over 30 countries on our International Volunteer Projects Programme in Ireland
- The involvement of 60 young people with fewer opportunities on our Teenage Programme
- Placing 140 volunteers (including 14 long term volunteers) on projects in 50 countries worldwide
- The tremendous work of the Dublin Local Group with their painting and decorating projects for elderly people
- Having a stand at the Electric Picnic and Knockstockan festivals and promoting VSI at over 20 college and other volunteering fairs.
- Developing the Peace Crane Project
- The hosting of a seminar on Short-term EVS for young people with Fewer Opportunities with partners and branches of SCI and VSI in Greystones in December with 18 people from 8 countries taking part.
- The hosting of the SCI Placement Officer Training Seminar in Dublin in March with 30 people from

15 countries taking part.

- The Pilot Senior Volunteering Project with the Czech Republic

A more detailed summary can be found in the reports which follow.

Staff

Tom Ryder (VSI Co-ordinator), Helen Walmsley (IVP Development Officer), Grace Walsh (Teenage Programme Co-ordinator), Margaret Brannigan (Office Administrator), Irina Debenjak are the current staff team. The National Committee would like to express gratitude to the staff team who over the year have approached their work in a professional and enthusiastic manner.

The NC would also like to acknowledge the effort that volunteers put into VSI and thank them for their time and energy in 2010.

The National Committee would like to thank:

- All our volunteers, activists and committee members
- Sponsoring and Co-operating organisations
- Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs
- The National Lottery
- Youth In Action Programme / Leargas
- Irish Aid
- FAS
- Trocaire
- Community Foundation
- Howlin and O'Rourke –auditors
- HSE
- SCI Branches and the SCI International Secretariat.



Etienne and Linda VSI volunteers at an environmental project in Ecuador

International Volunteer Projects Programme

IVP Facts and Figures:

IVP Outgoing Volunteers

Out of 20 different countries that volunteers travelled to this year, Iceland was the most popular destination with 17 volunteers choosing it; this reflects the high number of projects on offer in Iceland. Other top destination countries for volunteers from Ireland this year were Germany (6) and Russia (5). The volunteers worked in a variety of areas including the environment, work with children, people with disabilities and young people and arts and culture.

Breakdown of outgoing volunteers by country:

Ireland	29
Iceland	17
Germany	6
Russia	5
Czech Rep	4
Estonia	3
Greece	3
Switzerland	3
US	3
Macedonia	2
Poland	2
Turkey	2
Austria	1
Finland	1
France	1
Netherlands	1
Norway	1
Portugal	1
Spain	1
Ukraine	1
Total	87

IVP Projects in Ireland

This year the International Volunteer Projects (IVP) programme hosted a total of 119 volunteers from 24 different countries, on 23 projects in Ireland.

29 volunteers from Ireland took part in the projects in Ireland, last year this figure was 11 which was an increase from previous years. This perhaps shows how volunteering trends are changing as more people choose to have an international volunteering experience without leaving Ireland.

Breakdown of incoming volunteers by the country that volunteers came from:

Ireland	29
Germany	12
France	9
Czech Republic	8
Italy	7
Russia	6
Poland	5
Spain	5
United States	5
Croatia	4
Japan	4
Switzerland	4
Mexico	3
Netherlands	3
Slovenia	3
Belgium	2
Canada	2
Great Britain	2
Albania	1
Catalonia	1
Finland	1
Hungary	1
Latvia	1
Sweden	1
Total:	119

“It was one of the best experiences of my life.”

IVP Projects in Ireland 2010

Project	Work carried out	Number of projects	
Anti-Racist and Ethnic Minorities			
Mosney (Co. Meath)	Running activities at the Children's Summer/Easter Camps at Mosney Accommodation Centre for asylum seekers.	(3)	April/ July/ August
Work with People with Disabilities			
Cuisle (Co. Roscommon)	Accompanying guests on trips and socialising with them at the Irish Wheelchair Association holiday centre.	(4)	April/ June/ July/ August
Shine (Dublin City)	Working at the 'Spina Bifida Hydrocephalus Ireland Nurturing Empowerment' (SHINE) annual residential Summer Independence Training Project which caters for teenagers and young adults with spina bifida and/or hydrocephalus.	(5)	July/ August
Work with Children, Young People and the Elderly			
Barcroft Summer Camp (Co. Down)	Helping with activities at Barcroft Community Centre annual Summer Scheme for children and young people in Newry.	(1)	July-August
Ecological, Environmental and Agricultural			
Sonairte (Co. Meath)	Gardening, apple harvesting, building maintenance, helping at the reception desk, eco shop and café at Sonairte interactive visitor centre promoting ecological awareness and sustainable living	(6)	April/ May/ June/ July/ August/ September
Ballybay	Fruit-picking and general gardening work at Camphill Ballybay Community.	(1)	July-August
Youngrove (Co. Cork)	Clearing plants and overgrowth and dry-stone walling at a site to develop a sustainable education centre in Midleton.	(1)	August
Glebe House (Co. Down)	Cleaning, painting, gardening, picking apples etc. after the summer children's programme at Glebe House cross community residential centre in Strangford.	(1)	August-September
Ballytobin (Co. Kilkenny)	Manual and gardening work at Ballytobin Camphill Community.	(1)	October

IVP Overview

IVP Main Programme Support Events 2010

March

- IVP Programme hosted the SCI Placement Officer Training for the North-North Programme
- Info Day at Central Hotel
- Info Evening at Ilac Library

June

- Child Protection Training
- IVP Prep Evening
- Prep Day

July

- Exchange Evaluation Planning Meeting (EEM), Belgium

October

- EEM in Ukraine

November

- IVP Evaluation Day

The volunteers of the International Volunteer Projects Committee (IVPC) run the programme together with the IVP Development and Placement Officers; the work they do includes giving presentations at Info Days, running stalls at fairs, running Preparation and Evaluation Days and travelling around the country visiting our Host organisations and volunteers to Open and Close IVP projects.

The EVS volunteer Placement Officer this year was Emeline Guillaumie, who volunteered from February to July. During this time Emeline worked as the IVP Placement Officer and helped out with other areas of the programme, Emeline also attended the SCI Placement Officer and Peace Messenger Trainings.

The SCI Exchange Evaluation Meeting (EEM) is the annual evaluation meeting of the North-North programme and Helen Walmsley the IVP Development Officer was a member of the Prep Team this year. The meeting took place in October in Ukraine and was attended by 35 representatives from SCI branch and partner organisations.

Here I am again writing to you on a very slow computer from the middle of Iceland, in Kerlingarfjöll on the Kjölur Road, a gravel road on the south - north route between two glaciers Hofskjökull and Langjökull.

Our work here is very diverse, anything that is necessary, like painting, cleaning, trail maintenance. Clearing up rubbish in the surrounding area is easy as there is remarkably little. My favourite job is restoring the trails and marking new ones. When you have been going over the mountains for years there is something exciting about designing a path that is safe to use and stops people falling into a precipice, it gives you the sort of Catcher in the Rye feeling.

Seven of us are housed in one of the mountain huts which leaves little privacy. But at least you can escape. We are surrounded by easily accessible hills and you can walk right through the night, as the sun sets at midnight and rises again at 2. An Irish monk wrote from here in the 9th century that it was bright enough at night to pick the lice off a man's shirt. Luckily we have not had to do that.

These are edited extracts from Almut's letters from Iceland, for a fuller version please see the VSI website.

Almut Schlepper in Iceland



These are my fellow volunteers



These poles we had to carry to mark a long-distance trail. This area had summer skiing only 15 years ago, now the snow is nearly gone.

Thanks

IVP Committee members in 2010: Karl Downey, Laura Duggan, Diego Gallagher, Emmet Griffin, Melanie Gutman, Robert Jennings, Lorena Lampedecchia, Claire McNamara, Timothy Andrew McKeon, Garrett Mullan, Cillian Smyth and Nohema Aparicio-Polo Velazquez.

Emmet Griffin, Fiona Dolan, Mike Burkett and Fran Baker coordinated projects at the Mosney Accommodation Centre.

Ruth Kennington and members of the VSI National Committee helped out with various tasks on the IVP.

Emeline Guillaumie was the IVP EVS volunteer in 2010. Amanda Slevin volunteered as a mentor on the EVS hosting programme.

The VSI Administrator Margaret Branningan helped out with placements, projects and on many other areas of the programme.

The fantastic staff and volunteers of the Host organisations in Ireland looked after the volunteers, supported them in their work, made sure they had a good time and that they learnt about Ireland.

A huge thank you to all the above for the help and support you have given us over the year, the programme could not have happened without you.

Special thanks

A long time member of the IVPC, Melanie Gutman left in October to return to France after 9 years living in Ireland. During this time Melanie has been a great support and has done a huge amount of work for the IVP, too much to list here. Melanie also volunteered in other areas in VSI e.g. various tasks in the office, helping with IT and meeting and supporting both international and Irish volunteers. We are already missing Melanie and we wish her the best of everything for the future.

“I matured and grew up. It was a life experience. Fantastic.”



Melanie (centre) with international IVP volunteers in Ballytobin, October 2010

Development Education

Africa, Asia, Latin America And Middle East Programme

In 2010 VSI enabled 36 volunteers to join our Development Education programme to International Volunteer Projects in Africa (Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia); Asia (India, Thailand and Vietnam); Latin America (Ecuador); Middle East (Jordan and Palestine). Many of the participants took part in 2 or more volunteer projects during their visit to a country/region.

The programme involved

- Info Workshops in Dublin (3) in February (200 people attended)
- World Development Workshops in Dublin in May and June which included sessions on Debt and Development; Water Issues in Latin America, The Aids crisis in Uganda (40 people attended)
- A 1 day Evaluation Workshop in Dublin in October with 16 people taking part

Incoming Volunteers

Due to visa difficulties we were unable to host volunteers from Ghana and India.

Volunteers Health and Safety Handbook

We published 500 copies of our new Health and Safety Handbook for volunteers going on the programme. It is also available on the VSI website and the SCI Wikipedia pages.

Research Project with former volunteers

The group has completed a research project (Survey Monkey on Google) with former volunteers (2004-2008) during the early part of 2010. 60 participants responded and there has been a very positive feedback from them.

Africa Days

VSI took part in the Africa Days in Dublin and Limerick. We devised two development education exercises – on food and general knowledge. Over 500 people visited the VSI stands at both venues.

Africa Working Group

VSI continues to play an active role in the SCI Africa Working Group. Tom Ryder attended the annual meeting in Finland in October, which was attended by several other SCI branches -Belgium, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Slovenia, Spain, Catalonia and four partner organisations from Ghana, Botswana and Togo. The meeting:-

- Evaluated the current programme with partners throughout Africa. This year around 200 SCI

volunteers took part in projects with our partners in Africa

- Shared information about solidarity and development education projects
- Agreed the incoming volunteers for 2011
- Developed a Wikipedia site for the working group

In addition to the Africa Working Group meeting we had several joint sessions with the SCI Latin America Group (Abya Yala), the SCI Middle East working group and the newly emerging Asia Working Group. A more detailed report of the meetings is available from the VSI office. Women from a Malawi village thank volunteers for their help with a school building project

Networking

Tom Ryder represents VSI on the Dochas Development Education Group. Their main activities during 2010 were:

- Promoting the code of conduct for NGO's on Images and Development.
- Maintaining links to European and Irish networks
- Researching the use of new technologies in development education

Tom Ryder represents VSI on the Comhlámh Volunteering Options Working Group. This group has 2 main activities

- the development of a Volunteer Charter for all volunteers going to work in developing countries
- the development of a Code of Good Practice for sending organisations

The group has met several times during the year and has held workshops on issues of common concern e.g. Child protection, health and safety of volunteers; insurance; etc

The VSI Development Education Group members are; Anne Payne, Annette Duffy, Anne Mc Kiernan, Sarah Quinn, Roisin Traynor, Larry Doyle, Luke Scollan, Tom Ryder. Thanks also to Anna Landy in Limerick.

"I learnt loads about the country on different levels: its geography, history, politics, people, customs and traditions."



Kevin Sullivan visiting a local school in Zanzibar during a volunteer project this summer

I learned a lot from my experience. I learned you have to be patient and adaptable. I met so many people over the four weeks and was exposed to so many different cultures and this was definitely one of the best things I got from the projects. The living conditions were tough at times but it makes you appreciate what I have at home and I think I have become a lot more tolerant from the overall experience. It was great to get to know the children, even though there was the language barrier we still managed to teach them and have fun.

Brona volunteer to Vietnam

The experience was mutually beneficial in every way. I learned the harm tourism can do to a country when not controlled and how corruption in governments affects the average person. I also learned to cook Thai food, speak Thai, how to give a Thai massage, and about Buddhism, Islam and Thai etiquette.

Jo Ann volunteer to Thailand

Personally I gained a valuable insight into a vastly different culture/society, which allows a more balanced perspective on the world. I gained an understanding of the political, social and economic issues facing developing countries like Zambia from a first-hand perspective, especially the impact of HIV on young people. I was also pleasantly surprised to learn how little I was happy to live with, having basically only some clothes, a sleeping bag, soap, food and water, and really not missing hot showers and cappuccinos.

Kevin volunteer to Zambia

Overall this was a life changing and life affirming experience. I would thoroughly recommend it to anyone of any age. I made so many new International friends as well as Palestinian friends. I was immensely educational and provided me with a complete understanding of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinians land.

Micheal volunteer to Palestine

Long Term Volunteering

VSI enabled 14 volunteers to take part in long term voluntary service projects during 2010. Many of the projects came under the EU Youth Programme – European Voluntary Service (EVS) – which is open to 18-30 year olds and all costs are paid by the EU.

Sinead Walsh volunteered with a project working with street children in Perm, Russia

Una Timlin volunteered at a special school in eastern Ukraine.

Louise Smyth volunteered in a youth organisation in Magdeburg in eastern Germany.

Melina Diver volunteered at an animal rescue sanctuary in Ostend, Belgium.

Paddy O Hanlon volunteered with WWOOF Bulgaria.

Jade Cuthbert volunteered at a special school near Athens in Greece.

Christopher Carey volunteered with Volunteer Centre Zagreb in Croatia

Doireann Cooney is volunteering at a school for refugee children in Georgia.

Ethna Mc Dermott volunteered at an ECO centre in Turkey.

Hannah Anderson is volunteering at a special needs centre in Germany.

Kevin Sheedy is volunteering at a special needs school in Germany

Kieran Mc Grane is volunteering at a Youth Cultural centre in Barcelona.

Leigh San Juan is volunteering at a community arts centre in Slovenia.

Micheline Clancy volunteered at a disability advocacy organisation in Finland.

VSI was able to place several long-term volunteers from Japan, Croatia, Italy for 3-4 months at the Glebe House project in Northern Ireland during the summer. VSI is a recognised sending organisation for the EVS programme. The Long Term Exchange Group of SCI publishes a vacancy list every two months (available from the VSI web pages) which gives details of projects in many European countries, North America and a smaller number in Africa, Asia or Latin America. There are many volunteer reports on the VSI web site from EVS volunteers.

EVS Volunteering at a wildlife rescue centre in Belgium

I've been a volunteer in Belgium for the past nine months and it's going by very fast.

I have to admit I was a bit dubious at first about volunteering for a year and the decision to apply was made because I knew it would help with my career. The work I do here has turned out to be as rewarding as I was hoping for and I will be very sorry to leave at the end of the year.

I volunteer in a wildlife rescue hospital in Oostende. The hospital takes in injured and orphaned wild animals, mostly birds. My job is to help take care of them. Each day consists of lots of feeding and cleaning and helping with the medications. In the summer there are mostly young animals and in the winter-oiled birds, then autumn and spring bring in the accident and poison victims. I really love being able to see the progression in the animals from being sick to being released. Unfortunately animals dying and being euthanised is a daily part of the job - some have injuries that can't be fixed and some are on their last legs when they are brought to us. Because it's a charity the hospital can only do so much - there are simply too many animals, not enough staff and not enough money. Very many of the problems caused to the animals are because of people and it's very sad to see. We have many birds coming in with injuries from fishing equipment, car accident victims, deliberate poisoning - the list goes on. I realise acutely how many problems wild animals have in just trying to survive. I have the impression that people tend only to think of wildlife as being in Africa or countries other than their own and do not realise how rich the wildlife surrounding them actually is.

Needless to say, it's not just the work I'm enjoying. Living in Belgium has been quite a cultural experience - it's amazing how many small differences there are between here and Ireland. I can definitely promote Belgium and my project as a place to volunteer - it's been a pretty valuable year so far which isn't over yet and I'm sure to enjoy the last few months.

Melina Diver

EVS project in Germany

Hi, my name is Kevin Sheedy. I am a 23 year old volunteer from Dublin. I chose to do my EVS working in a centre for special needs adults in Germany. For me the EVS gives you the opportunity to work and learn from another culture. Another benefit is the chance to learn a foreign language, which for me meant brushing up on my Leaving Cert German.

Now I am here just over a month, I currently live in a small village called Giesensdorf in the north of Germany, halfway between Hamburg and Berlin. I work with an organisation called CJD (Christliches Jugenddorfwerk Deutschlands) which is a group that works nationally with youths, the unemployed and the disabled. The centre in Giesensdorf caters for thirty seven clients who live here in the home. The slogan of the organisation is 'CJD - Die Chancengeben' (CJD- The Chance/opportunity enablers) and it certainly lives up to that promise.

The centre provides the opportunity for it's

residents to get creative with arts and crafts, engage in sport and it also has a band and theatre group. Last week the group performed Agatha Christie's 'Death on the Nile' at a senior citizens home. Next week the show goes to Potsdam. The emphasis is to foster and develop the various talents of our residents.

My role here is to assist the residents in their daily lives. This ranges from helping preparing meals to organising various activities. One of the main highlights of my time here so far was the responsibility for organising the Halloween party. This involved arranging various costumes, decorating the room for the party, building a scarecrow, ghost stories, music, dancing, bobbing for apples, art and finally trick or treating in the village (something which I had not done in over ten or twelve years!). The day proved a huge success and I look forward to the various possibilities that this project has to offer over the coming year.



Kevin Sheedy and friends enjoying the Halloween party

Dublin Local Group

The Dublin Local Group (DLG) of VSI undertakes to improve the living conditions of the elderly, disabled and marginalised living in Dublin. The work we undertake is normally referred to us by Vincent de Paul, Friends of the Elderly, Care Local and the Social Work Departments of Dublin City Council, the Health Service Executive and all hospitals in the Dublin City Area.

We mainly try to help out in situations where the living standard of a person or family has fallen well below the general standard and where they are unable to help themselves because of their physical or financial situation. The type of work involves painting, wall papering, small repairs and some cleaning.

There are currently around 15 active members in the DLG (5 more than last year!). We meet each Saturday morning to carry out our work. We have a meeting after every job to discuss current issues and to visit new projects. We have volunteers from all parts of the world in our group. We also have a healthy social programme with outings and other events.

So far this year we have received about 39 requests for assistance. We have assessed 26 and undertaken and completed 7. We noticed quite a big increase in the amount of application for assistance this year compared to last year, and therefore we could not attend to as many jobs as we wanted to. Since we had a good amount of active volunteers on a weekly basis, we decided to focus on slightly bigger



Volunteers from the Dublin Local Group in action

projects than usual and spent a little more time in them.

These projects have taken place all across the city and were very varied: it included work such as cleaning rubbish from a 2 bedroom flat of a very nice man in Cabra Dublin 7, painting the 1 bedroom terraced house of gentleman suffering from long term mental illness living in Dublin 8 and wallpapering a 1 bedroom flat for a visual impaired woman in Dublin 8 or filling a skip full of old papers and broken furniture from a 2 bedroom house in Cabra. One of the hardest jobs we did this year was in the garden of a house where we had to take care of the back garden and ended up filling 17 bin bags full of grass!

Our future objective for the group in 2011 is to recruit a second team leader in order to create two groups and do a lot more jobs.

More details on the group can be found on our website www.dublinlocalgroup.org <http://www.dublinlocalgroup.org/> or you can email us at dlg@dublinlocalgroup.org

50 Up

During 2010 we enjoyed working on an exciting new Senior Volunteering project called '50 Up'. Together with a new partner organisation, Defence for Children International (DCI) in the Czech Republic, we developed the project to promote and encourage volunteering amongst those in the over 50s age group. Funded by the Grundtvig Senior Volunteering Programme, part of the European Commission's Lifelong Learning Programme, 50Up was a pilot project that involved 4 participants from Ireland and 4 from the Czech Republic; each group visited the partner country for 3 weeks and learnt about volunteering there, with a particular slant on Senior Volunteering. They visited NGOs, community and voluntary groups and government departments and also took part in voluntary activities, meeting many other volunteers along the way, both groups were involved in hosting the

volunteers in their home countries.

The participants have shared their learning with VSI and DCI, this will be included in a guide to Senior Volunteering that will be produced as part of the project, by VSI and DCI in 2011. It is intended that this guide will be used by volunteering organisations and volunteers themselves, with the aim of increasing the numbers of people over the age of 50 taking part in volunteering activities.

Thanks to: Grundtvig, Leargas, Volunteering Ireland, Age & Opportunity, St. Francis Hospice, Irish Aid Volunteering and Information Centre, Southill Parish, Marek Glowczynski, Mosney Accommodation Centre and to all who supported and took part in the project.

Teenage Programme

The Teenage Programme worked with over 60 young people in the past year, including early school leavers; separated children seeking asylum; young people from residential care; and other young people who have not had the opportunity to access VSI's programmes in the past. We organised volunteer days, residential volunteering weekends, international youth exchanges and other activities to introduce these young people to the values and aims of VSI. The following are the key activities that were organised in 2010.

Sustainable Development Peer Education Project

16 young people from 10 different countries, all living in Ireland, took part in a 5-day residential project over the Easter break. The young people volunteered at the Greystones Community Garden Project, and took part in a number of workshops on Sustainable Development, which were facilitated by young people from the programme. The project finished with a small concert in the Community Gardens with Congolese Musician Niwel Tsumbu.

European Voluntary Service Short-term and Sheltered Placements

The Teenage Programme aimed to increase the number of supported independent placements for experienced participants in 2010, in an attempt to encourage young people who have been involved in our programmes for some time to take on a more challenging project and to take the next step. We did this through the provision of Short-term European Voluntary Service placements and the Sheltered Placement Programme. Both projects allowed for young people to undertake individual placements on an international volunteering project but with some financial and personal support (provided through reinforced mentorship). Through these projects we sent volunteers to the following projects;

- Organising a local alternative community festival in Jousento, Finland;
- Volunteering on an organic farm and social inclusion project in Lille, France;
- Organising a summer camp for children of asylum seekers in the Mosney Accommodation Centre, Co Meath;
- Volunteering on an organic farm and working with people with disabilities on a Camphill community project in Monaghan;
- Volunteering on an organic farm on the Youngrove project in Co Cork.

All the young people who took part in these placements took part in a special training in June which was run in partnership with the Peter McVerry Trust.

International Youth Exchanges

International Youth Exchanges organised by VSI are the principle activity of the Teenage Programme, as they allow the young people to take part in a residential project that fully combines a non-formal and informal approach to peace education, as well as a first-hand experience with a volunteering project. These exchanges are an important tool in the development of the young person's social and personal skills, as well as an introduction to the values of VSI through the experience of living in an intercultural environment for a short period of time. During the summer months VSI's Teenage Programme was involved in a number of unique and exciting youth projects here in Ireland, and around Europe. VSI ran two youth exchanges in Ireland and also sent groups of young volunteers to projects in Belgium, Catalunya and Spain.

Preparation weekend

A **preparation weekend** took place in June in Co. Wicklow where the participants were prepared for the youth exchanges they were going to take part in. Along with some practical information they also took part in outdoors games and others team building activities.

Fata Morcircus

In Belgium, the young people took part in a project called **Fata Morcircus**, which involved learning circus performance games and acts, preparing the props and stage area for a circus, and performing for a group of local children in the community. The 4 young people were joined by two youth leaders, as well as participants from Belgium, Spain and Italy.

11th District Exchange

In Catalunya 4 young people took part in the **11th District Exchange**, which took place in Barcelona. The group discussed and learned about the causes of homelessness, volunteered in a local shelter for homeless people, and organized an exhibition using drama and art to share information with the public and local public representatives on the causes of homelessness.

"I feel very good about myself. I feel I can do something to help others in a community"



Participants on the Aran Islands permaculture project

Melifera

A third group of young people travelled to Northern Tenerife to take part in the **Melifera** Youth Exchange, which looked at the environmental impact of the tourism industry on the Canarian island. The young people took part in workshops on environmental issues, and volunteered in a beach clean-up, as well as releasing sea turtles back into the wild.

Images of Peace

In Ireland, the first project, **Images of Peace**, took place in Wicklow around the theme the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the effects of conflict on the rights of children. Groups from Italy, Spain, Ireland and the UK took part, including young people from Chad, DRC, Somalia, Kenya, Nigeria, Iraq, Sierra Leone, Morocco, and a number of European countries. The young people took part in workshops on human rights, children in conflict and the UN Convention, as well as art workshops which helped them create paintings and collages on the UN Convention, which were then displayed at the Festival of World Cultures in Dun Laoghaire.

Aisling Project

The second exchange, the **Aisling Project** was located on Inis Mór, Aran Islands, Co. Galway and the project was on the theme of sustainable living. The groups came from Spain, Slovenia, Ireland and France with the Irish group including young people from Moldova, Ghana and Rwanda. The young people lived in Killeany Lodge, which is completely

self-sufficient using permaculture methods, and learned to live more sustainably, while also helping with a beach clean-up and a dry-stone walling project.

Evaluation Weekend

In September 2010 we held an **evaluation weekend** in Greystones where all the participants for 2010 gathered to speak about their experiences. It was an opportunity to express themselves about what they had learned during this summer but also to exchange their feelings and think a little bit about what they would like to do next year within the VSI Teenage programme. We also carried out planning, learning and action workshops to identify topics and issues that the young people would like to focus on in 2011.

YUWG

VSI is an active member of SCI's working group of YUWG, which aims to make the activities of SCI more accessible to young people with fewer opportunities. It is within this framework that youth exchanges and other projects involving the cooperation of various branches of SCI takes place. In 2010, YUWG hosted a number of **meetings and seminars** – the first meeting took place in Italy in April, the second in Italy in September, and the third in France in November. All these meetings give VSI and the other branches of SCI working with this target group the opportunity to evaluate their work, and plan new projects and developments for the future.



Planting daffodils during the Wicklow Easter Project

In addition to this, YUWG organises **training** for volunteers and this year they organised training for youth leaders in Genoa, Italy in May. This year, we sent 3 volunteers and 3 trainers to the SCI Youth Leader Training. This 4-day training looked at leadership skills, quality of youth exchanges, and at working with the target group of the Teenage Programme.

Development Education and the Teenage Programme

2010 saw a huge increase in the capacity of the Teenage Programme to incorporate development education into its programmes, thanks to the support of Trócaire through its Mobilising for Justice Grant Programme. With the help of this programme we organised a number of activities;

- **2 residential weekend trainings** for 12 youth leaders and volunteers from the Teenage Programme on global justice issues, and methods for exploring these with young people with fewer opportunities;
- Monthly **Culture Circle** Meetings which were informal facilitated workshops on topics proposed by the young people (Haiti, Introduction to Development, Israel / Palestine);
- Inputs on a number of Youth Exchanges on topics such as poverty, sustainable development and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child;

- A 5-day residential project on Sustainable Development for 16 young people.

Miscellaneous Activities

Young people and volunteers from the Teenage Programme this year were involved in a number of miscellaneous activities in addition to those listed above;

- A **street collection** to raise money for Trócaire's Haiti Emergency Fund;
- Took part in the **Women's Mini Marathon**;
- Submitted an application for funding for a Youth Initiative which will use film to explore the lives of young asylum seekers in Ireland;
- Kate Fox, a participant from the programme attended seminars in Paris and Brussels to mark the **European Year against Poverty and Social Exclusion**;
- Our EVS volunteer Irina Debenjak took part in **intercultural awareness** training with the NYCI, and the Teenage Programme was listed as a best practice example in intercultural youthwork in the NYCI's Promoting Quality in Intercultural Youth Work: 12 Steps to Good Practice.
- Leaders and volunteers took part in a 4-hour **Child Protection Training**, facilitated by the NYCI.

Thank You

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A big thank you to our EVS volunteer Irina Debenjak from Austria who worked with the Teenage Programme from February and will remain until January 2011.

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Léargas www.leargas.ie

Niwel Tsumbu www.niweltsumbu.com

Aisling Aran and Killeany Lodge
www.ancharraig.com

The Happy Pear www.thehappypear.ie

Greystones Community Garden www.thegarden.ie

Greystones Tidy Towns
www.greystonestidytowns.ie

Trocaire www.trocaire.org

Carraig Eden Theological College

“Through my time in VSI I have learned how to live with different people from different countries, and cultures, and the most important thing is peace”

“I have learned who I am and who I can become and so many life skills I could be 50 years old!”



Michael and Tunde at work in the Greystones Community Garden project



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