



# Annual Report 2014



# Voluntary Service International (VSI)



## National Committee

The 2013 AGM was held in Dublin in December and 25 members took part. The AGM appointed a new National Committee (NC). They were: Ken Jennings (Chair), Armin Krautgasser (Treasurer), Kate O Carroll, Michelle Lam, Andrew McKeown. Andrew resigned in January and Armin resigned in March. Kevin Sullivan was co-opted in August.

The NC met several times during 2014. The main issues covered at the meetings were VSI Governance; Finances of VSI; National Quality Standards Framework (NQSF); Revising the Staff Handbook; Programmes of VSI.

### Staff

Tom Ryder (VSI Co-ordinator), Helen Walmsley (Volunteer Programme Co-ordinator), Grace Walsh (Teenage Programme Co-ordinator), Catherine Lawless (Office Administrator until July) and Jenni Kemppainen (IVP Placement Officer) helped to keep the many VSI programmes and activities moving along in 2014. 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.

### THANKS: The National Committee would like to thank:

- All our volunteers, activists and committee members
- Sponsoring and co-operating organisations
- Department of Children and Youth Affairs (via National Lottery)
- Youth In Action Programme and Erasmus+ Programme via Leargas
- FÁS
- Howlin and O'Rourke (auditors)
- Health Service Executive
- SCI Branches and the SCI International Secretariat
- VSI Marketing Working Group especially Miriam Amador

- VSI is a member of the National Youth Council of Ireland
- VSI is a member of Dochas, the association of Irish Development NGOs
- VSI is a signature to the Dochas Code of Conduct on Images and Messages
- VSI is a signatory to the Comhlámh Code of Good Practice for Volunteer Sending Agencies

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*VSI is the Irish Branch of Service Civil International (SCI), a worldwide movement working for peace, social justice and international understanding through voluntary service, international exchanges, education and awareness programmes. Registered as Seirbhis Deonach Idirnáisiúnta Teo. Company limited by guarantee. Registration No.: 14 05 20; Charity no.: CHY 9220*

*Cover photos: Greek disability project, Building Resilience Project and Volunteers at Killarney*

## International Volunteer Projects (IVP) Programme 2014



### IVP Projects in Ireland

VSI hosted 17 volunteer projects (one of which was in Northern Ireland) providing volunteering opportunities to 125 people of 24 different nationalities.

In 2014 VSI organised two new projects, one in Cloughjordan, Co. Tipperary and one in Callan, Co. Kilkenny (see table for more details). VSI recruited eleven volunteer Project Coordinators for eight projects in Killarney, Mosney, Cloughjordan, Grangebeg and Glebe House.

*Volunteer group on lunch break in Killarney, July 2014.*



*Collection of pictures from Building Resilience – Non-Violence Needs Nature, Cloughjordan, Co. Tipperary*

See also the video from [Cloughjordan](#), made by the international volunteers.

## VSI International Volunteer Projects in Ireland 2014

Project description	Type of Work:	Study Theme:	Month
<p><b>Building Resilience - Non-violence needs Nature</b> (Co. Tipperary) Building Resilience in Cloughjordan Ecovillage was one of three “Non-violence needs Nature” projects, co-funded through the European Youth Foundation. The project aims to highlight the topic of climate justice within the SCI movement, and is part of the overall Create Climate for Peace Campaign.</p> <p>The aim of the project was to explore a community-based response to climate change and to understand the role individuals have in their own communities and climate justice, homes and environments in addressing the unequal effect of climate change across our communities and the world. The project will also challenge volunteers to look at their own contribution to climate change, and to explore real alternatives.</p>	Working on the Community Farm and various workshops connected to the study theme.	Climate justice, community resilience, community food systems, the eco-village as a model of a community-led response to climate change	July - August
<p><b>Callan Workhouse Union</b> (Co. Kilkenny) The grounds of the original Workhouse include Local Authority offices, social housing, the town's fire station, artists' studios, a Camphill Community where adults with a disability are supported to live and work in an inclusive environment and a small biodynamic garden.</p>	Hard landscaping, gardening, clearing ground, small scale building work and creating hospitable grounds for community activity at the new cultural hub.	The history and arts practices in Callan, Camphill communities and local area	July
<p><b>Camphill Ballybay</b> (Co. Monaghan) Ballybay offers a sheltered environment for people with intellectual disabilities At the community there is a small farm building, a weavery, candle-making workshop, a wood workshop and garden buildings. The farm and vegetable garden are run along organic/ bio-dynamic lines.</p>	Picking fruit and general gardening work.	Camphill philosophy and life in the community	July - August
<p><b>Cuise</b> (Co. Roscommon) The Irish Wheelchair Association is a voluntary organisation dedicated to the achievement of full social, economic and educational integration of people with</p>	Volunteers socialise and interact with the holiday guests and accompany them on trips and also help in the kitchen.	Disability issues	2 projects: June-July and July

physical disabilities, Cuisle is their holiday centre.			
<b>Glebe House</b> (Co. Down) is a cross community residential centre that aims to enable people to understand their different points of view and experience alternatives to violence and conflict and ways of living in peace.	Cleaning of the Centre, harvesting fruit and making jams and preserves.	Northern Ireland politics, history, community relations	Sept
<b>Grangebeg Camphill Community</b> (Co. Kildare). Grangebeg is a small Camphill community for adults who have intellectual disabilities. The community cares for and manages 46 acres of land, on which they run a small herd of cattle, sheep, pigs and chickens. The community is organically certified.	Helping the community to build a natural outdoor shelter which will house a pizza oven, landscaping.	Camphill philosophy and life in the community	June
<b>Killarney National Park</b> (Co. Kerry) The National Park is 10,000 hectares in size and comprises mountains, lakes and woodland. It has an extensive range of trees, plants and wildlife. In the 19th century the rhododendron tree/bush was introduced and this has proved to be a highly invasive and destructive tree and has threatened to colonise large areas of the park.	Rhododendron control in remote areas of the park.	Environmental issues	4 Projects: June x1, July x2, August x1
<b>Mosney</b> (Co. Meath) is a former holiday resort, which now provides housing for almost 700 residents from 50 different countries seeking asylum in Ireland. There are approximately 100 children and young people aged 6 – 16yrs resident in Mosney, volunteers are needed to help run a Summer Activity Camp for some of these children.	Organising activities: sports, arts, drama etc. for the children, day trips.	Asylum-seeking process in different countries	July - August
<b>SHINE</b> (Dublin) SHINE (Spina Bifida Hydrocephalus Ireland Nurturing Empowerment) is an annual residential Summer Independence Training Project which caters for teenagers and young adults with Spina Bifida and/or Hydrocephalus.	Encouraging and supporting participants so assisting participants with personal care, kitchen duty clamping, wheelchairs onto buses.	Social care, disability awareness, occupational therapy	5 Projects: July x3, August x2

## IVP Volunteers abroad

VSI received 124 applications for projects abroad this year. 57 volunteers were placed in 24 different countries worldwide – Austria, Botswana, Croatia, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Kenya, Korea, Republic of Kosovo, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Tanzania, United Republic of Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States of America and Viet Nam.

The volunteers worked in a variety of areas including the environment, work with children, people with disabilities and young people and arts and culture.



Evaluation workshop in September

*"The volunteer group was my favourite thing about the project. It was great meeting people from many different countries and everyone got on very well. I think a good thing about this camp was that it was based in a fairly rural area so we had to make our own fun in the evenings, which is a good way to get to know people."*

Niall, Germany

*"Tips:*

*Go.  
Enjoy yourself.  
Talk to everyone.  
Be open.  
That's all."*

VSI organised a Preparation Workshop for outgoing volunteers in May and also met with individual volunteers. Issues covered include health and safety, child protection, intercultural learning, expectations, insurance and practical issues.

VSI organised one Evaluation Workshop in September which 10 volunteers attended. In addition 18 volunteers completed the online evaluation form. VSI volunteers organised these workshops with the support of the staff team.

*"I enjoyed the whole experience. I didn't enjoy the day when I had to leave and go home."*

Daniela, Botswana

*Working on a socially useful project in an unfamiliar country offers a more fulfilling experience than one could ever achieve as a tourist.  
Leave your presuppositions and your electronic baggage at home!*

Felicity, Ukraine

*"The work camps are addictive, memorable experiences. All the people I met taught me so much that I can't possibly express in words.*

*It was only a week, but it genuinely has changed me for the better and I wish everybody would undertake this experience because it seems obvious to me how it helps change the world for the better."*

Megan, England

### IVP Main Programme Events 2014:

- 2 Info Events in Dublin to promote the programme with over 30 participants taking part
- 10 volunteer and career fairs mostly in colleges; in Belfast, Dublin and Galway where we met with over 500 people.
- 1 Preparation Workshop for outgoing volunteers in May
- During the summer months staff, members and volunteers visited the projects in Ireland and met all the volunteers and hosts
- Evaluation Workshop in September
- Arrival of our EVS volunteer Jenni Kemppainen from Finland, as our Placement Officer in February



*Work site before and after, Create Climate for Peace Campaign Project in Kosovo*

### Thanks to:

- IVP Committee members in 2014: Annette Duffy, Diego Gallagher, Emmet Griffin, Lorena Lampedecchia
- The Volunteer Project Coordinators who made the Irish projects run smoothly
- The fantastic staff and volunteers of the host organisations in Ireland who welcome and look after their volunteers wonderfully

*"I think everyone should experience this project and location."*

Amanda, Croatia

## Teenage Programme

### Gender Representations in Arts and Media Youth Exchange

#### The Gender Representations Youth Exchange in July in Cloughjordan, Co.

**Tipperary** involved partner organisations from Bulgaria, Estonia, Italy, Catalonia, and Ireland. Twenty four young people from 14 different nationalities all aged between 16 and 21 years participated. The group were joined by a team of 11 leaders, coordinators and facilitators for the ten-day project, which explored the topic of Gender identity and gender discrimination in media and the arts.



The project used creative methodologies such as theatre, music and multimedia to allow the young people to create responses to the messages they receive about gender on a day-to-day basis. They hosted a showcase for the community of Cloughjordan at the end of the project where they shared their songs, short films, and experiences of the project. The group also had the opportunity to host an

intercultural night, take part in team-building games and take a day trip to the Cliffs of Moher and Galway City. The project was a great success with a lot of fun and learning for all involved.



### Cooperation with Palestinian youth organisations - Feasibility Visit

Delegates from Ireland, Slovenia, Scotland and Palestinian organisations in the West Bank and Israel, came together in Cloughjordan, Co Tipperary in February for a 4-day feasibility visit with the aim of building future partnerships in the area of youth work. The group of eight people took part in a series of facilitated activities

that allowed them to exchange knowledge about their individual organisations, share methods and approaches, and develop a better understanding of the specific context and challenges for Palestinian youth organisations in the region.

In addition to this, the project offered a great opportunity to raise awareness in the local community and to share individual insights into the ongoing situation in Israel / Palestine. The group visited St Michael's Primary School to talk about their home countries and share stories about their childhood there. VSI also organised a public event, "Voices from Palestine" which presented a unique opportunity for four Palestinian delegates, from Gaza, the West Bank, Israel and Ireland to share their



personal stories of conflict. Over 40 people attended this event and this was followed by a wonderful night of Palestinian –Irish music in the local bar which was enjoyed by all. It is hoped the project will lead to concrete partnerships in the future, with possibilities to develop youth projects in the long term through the new European youth programme, Erasmus+.

### **Paths to Inclusion Seminar March 10th - 16th in Cloughjordan, Co Tipperary**



VSI hosted Paths to Inclusion an international Seminar in March last in Cloughjordan, Co Tipperary. The seminar included 40 volunteers and staff from over 16 branches and partners of SCI. The seminar explored the topic of inclusion in Youth work.

There were inputs from the NYCI and Leargas, as well

as workshops allowing the participants to share experiences, and build ideas for best practice in future projects. There were 16 different nationalities among the 40 participants including volunteers the Eastern Caucasus countries of Georgia, Abkhazia and 1 volunteer from Ukraine.

### **Dialogue for Change Project**

The Dialogue for Change project was a six month Youth Democracy project under the Youth in Action Programme of the European Commission organised by VSI during 2014. VSI brought together many young asylum seekers (some of whom we have worked with previously) over a series of day and weekend events to enable them to build their confidence to talk about their experience of asylum seeking to politicians, journalists and interested youth and community organisations.

The project highlight was a day- long seminar in Smock Alley Theatre in Dublin in May where over 80 people attended. Dil Wickremasinghe from Newstalk Radio chaired and facilitated the event and Judge Catherine Mc Guinness from the Irish Refugee Council and Ifrah Ahmed from Somalia gave key inputs. The seminar was a great success and led to interviews on Newstalk radio and Galway Bay FM.

A final event was held in late May which brought all the young people involved in an evaluation workshop which included looking at future events for the group. The young people involved were a mix of young people already active in VSI and new participants recruited from Direct Provision Centres around the country.



## Long Term Volunteering

VSI enabled 7 young people from Ireland to take part in long-term international volunteer placements through the EU supported programme - European Voluntary Service (EVS) in 2014. EVS is open to 18-30 year olds and all costs are paid by the European Commission.

### VSI EVS volunteers who started their EVS projects in 2014:

Name	Country	Host organisation Type of work/
Paul Cleary	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Wings of Hope: Working on social inclusion and empowerment of women, youth, children and other vulnerable groups through the promotion of human rights, promotion of mental health and education.
Cordelia Lafferty	Kosovo	Balkan Sunflowers: Working for social change to inspire and engage in community action for human rights and dignity, working in education, health, culture, citizenship, employment, and respect for diversity.
Sinéad Mawe	Moldova	Centre for Assistance and Protection of Victims and Potential Victims of Trafficking.
John McTigue	Georgia	Charity Humanitarian Centre "Abkhazeti": Working to increase the role of individuals and communities in building civil society and strengthening democracy, to improve the social and economic conditions of internally displaced and other vulnerable populations through building capacity and increasing self-reliance.
Katie O'Hara	Slovenia	'Mladinski Center Litija': A youth club/centre supporting a school and delivering activities for youth.
Gina Ortega	France	'La Ferme des Enfants': A school based in an eco-village.
Maggie Ryan	Israel	Kids4Peace: A grassroots interfaith youth movement dedicated to ending conflict and inspiring hope in Jerusalem and other divided societies around the world.

## **EVS volunteers at Cloughjordan Community Farm**

Since February 2013 VSI has coordinated EVS volunteers in Cloughjordan Community Farm. Eva Toth and Sara Fakin both started their 12 month placements at Cloughjordan during 2014.

Almu Urbieto, David Vega and Ivana Lumokovska completed their EVS projects in Cloughjordan this year.

Thanks to the Cloughjordan Volunteer Support Team, the mentors and all the team in Cloughjordan for their brilliant hosting of the volunteers and continuous support throughout the project.



### **EVS volunteer story: Gina Ortega at La 'Ferme des Enfants', France**

*Photo: Gina with some of the children at the school*

EVS is an experience I'd recommend to any young person. Professionally, it's given me the chance of fully experimenting in the field of education before deciding if it's the kind of job I want to go for.

Participating in teacher meetings, spending time with kids, developing

and testing teaching materials... Needless to say this will surely be a great asset for my CV.

But EVS is much more than a professional experience and everyone made sure that I made the most of it at all levels. EVS is a truly well-organized programme where you have the freedom to enjoy things.

My sending organization VSI has been extremely attentive, helpful and efficient, making sure all my needs were covered and I that felt supported and comfortable in my project. My host organization has been equally kind.

Finally, EVS has been an intense personal development course. I can't say this experience is for the faint hearted as it takes courage and openness, but what you gain from it at a personal level is priceless. Prioritizing goals, time managing, the relationships with others, adapting to a new environment, dealing with potential language and isolation problems, developing personal resources, asserting your needs and opinions, etc. In such an intense experience I have been obliged to grow as a person.

So: don't think about it anymore! Just do it before you are 30!

### **Maggie Ryan EVS volunteer with Kids4Peace in Israel**

“EVS offers me the opportunity to immerse myself in a culture and a way of life that can only aid and enhance my understanding and appreciation for the development of global networks and supports that I see as key to my personal and professional development”.



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### **Jenni, EVS volunteer in the VSI office**

Numerous hours spent on a bus or a train, meeting hundreds of volunteers from around the world, dozens of funny moments and foreign accents, a few Mr. Whippies ice cream...

Just to mention a few things that I will certainly remember from my year with VSI. And it wasn't just by working at the office with the placements, visiting and evaluating the Irish projects and meeting all the volunteers, but also by being warmly welcomed (though I'm a total newcomer) to the worldwide SCI family.

The best part has definitely been seeing the country itself, like gorgeous Killarney National Park below.



## Dublin Local Group 2014

The Dublin Local Group (DLG) of VSI undertakes to improve the living conditions of marginalised, elderly and disabled people living in Dublin. 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, social or financial situation. The type of work involves cleaning, painting, de-cluttering, gardening and some small repairs.

Work requests are usually 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 meet each Saturday morning to carry out our work. We have a meeting after each assessment visit to make decisions on jobs and discuss future projects. We also have a healthy social programme with outings and other events.

There are currently 15 active members in the DLG and we have 6 new and very committed volunteers since January. Our group is mixed in gender and age and come from all parts of the world e.g. Singapore, France, Moldavia, Korea, America.

So far this year we have received 33 requests for assistance. We have assessed 19 and completed 8.

These projects have taken place all across the city and were very varied:

- Painting the bedrooms of a family suffering from mental illness in Mulhuddart
- De-cluttering a house in Terenure for a man suffering from depression
- Cutting the grass in the front garden of a man with learning disabilities in Clondalkin

Our proudest achievement this year is in SeatTech's offices Dublin 4. SeatTech provides posture positioning and seated mobility solutions for service users based on their individual needs. Incorporating 24-hour postural management systems, the service also provides support, information and training for service users and for service providers who work for Enable Ireland or as partners in the local community. We spent 6 Saturdays (10am to 4pm) painting 3 assessment rooms, 4 hallways and the manager's office and that was one of the most rewarding projects of the year.

Our 2015 objective is to keep doing good necessary local work in a fun and enjoyable atmosphere.

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

## Let's Move the Market EU Project focussing on youth and employment

VSI is involved in an EU wide project focussing on youth and employment with partners from Belgium, Germany, Greece, Italy and Slovenia in 2013 and 2014. The project involves each partner hosting a study visit around the main themes of the project and a local youth initiative in which young people are enabled to organise a local seminar or event on the themes of the project. VSI hosted the group in May 2014 and held a seminar 'Youth Work getting Youth Working' with Senator Jillian Van Turnout, Maria Doherty from Foroige and Vivienne Whelan and Stephen Doyle from the Wexford Youth Action Project. The group visited the Ballymun Job Centre and The Bolton Trust Docklands Innovation Park and held a mini seminar with Davie Philip from Feasta on the theme of employment and sustainability. VSI's survey of EVS volunteers is nearing completion and will be completed by January next. Kevin Sullivan has been our representative on the project and he has taken part in 2 study visits to Slovenia and Germany. The project will be completed in March next with a major seminar on the theme in Italy.



## European Citizenship in the Mirror

This project brought together partners from Italy, Ireland, Nepal, Mauritius and Mexico in a year- long project combining volunteering, job shadowing and research on the theme of citizenship and social exclusion. Volunteers from Ireland and Italy travelled in teams of 2 to Mexico, Mauritius and Nepal in April of this year and carried out field research on the theme of citizenship as well as joining in local volunteering projects. VSI hosted 3 volunteers from Mauritius, Mexico and Nepal during July on volunteering projects and in research which focussed on the Traveller Community. This involved meeting many different Traveller groups. All the volunteers then came together in Greystones, Co. Wicklow in late July to discuss debate and learn about the issue of citizenship. The workshop had great inputs from peace activist Caoimhe Butterly and Ian White formerly with Glenree Centre for Reconciliation. The volunteers are now working on an e-book on the themes of their research which will be completed by January next.

