

# REVES EXCELLENCE

## AWARD 2017

*Application form*



▪ **Part A: APPLICANT'S DETAILS**

Name of the organization: **Nuorisokeskus Villa Elba**  
Type of organization: **Youth Centre, nonprofit company working for common-good**  
Address: **Sannanrannantie 60**  
City: **Kokkola**  
Country: **Finland**  
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▪ **Part B: DESCRIPTION OF THE INITIATIVE**

1. Name of the initiative: **Elf Around! Group-EVS project**

2. For which topic(s) are you applying?

- Integration of migrants/refugees
- Digital economy
- European Structural and Investment Funds (in particular the implementation of Community-Led Local Development, CLLD)
- Youth capacity building
- Child poverty and vulnerability
- Transfer of enterprises (e.g. worker buy-out phenomenon)

3. Please describe the context of the initiative, providing also information about the identification of perceived needs and constraints in the target group(s).

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*(Max 7 lines)*

Youth Centre Villa Elba has created an annual exciting and different volunteering project for young people in which also young people with fewer opportunities can participate despite low language skills or social, economic or educational problems. In this project, strong cooperation with the public authorities (Finnish National Agency for Education, schools and kindergartens), third sector actors (service home for elderly persons, Red Cross) and the local community is important in order for volunteers to make work that has a meaning and impact on local community. We also want to share our cultural habits, and what would be more Finnish than elves?

4. Which are the main objectives of the initiative?

*(Max 5 lines)*

Elf path and Elf School creates natural contacts and interaction between people from different cultures. The aim is to empower young people and help them to learn skills that helps them find new paths, to bring internationality into the everyday life of locals and to give children exciting experiences in the nature nearby with elves.

5. Please describe the initiative, including the actors involved and the concrete activities.

*(Max 25 lines)*

Encouraging the mobility of young people has been a corner stone in Villa Elbas activities from the very beginning. Our international activities base on communality, solidarity, equity, equality, multiculturalism, internationalism, healthy lifestyle and respect for the environment and life. Our role as a development center for international youth work is to support actors in youth field to gain international experiences.

Elf around is a concept for both empowering young people with fewer opportunities and creating safe space for intercultural meetings. For Elf Around project, the volunteers plans and implements an Elf path for kids in kindergarten age, Elf schools for pupils in local schools and visits elderly homes with Christmas carols and handmade Christmas cards.

During the project, we have versatile cooperation with the town of Kokkola, for an example the department of Education helps with marketing the project to schools and kindergartens, the Environmental office offers materials for decoration from forests own by the town. We also cooperate with Kokkotyö foundation; they manufacture elf hats that we give to the children as a welcoming gift. Through cooperation with elderly services and third sector actors working voluntarily with old people we get in contact with elderly people who would like to have visits from the volunteers.

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Volunteers develop their own ability to organize and use their creativity and sense of initiative as well as strengths in the planning and preparation of Elf path and Elf school programmes. Volunteers also gain experience when acting as elves and interacting with children.

6. Please highlight the strengths of your approach, stressing also the elements that make it a real partnership.

*(Max 10 lines)*

This concept has been developed through years of experimenting with European partners. This is the concept that offer volunteering opportunities for youngsters for who it is almost impossible to find volunteering placements. The target group for this project is young people with fewer opportunities and we want to support unemployed young people, persons with social, economic and educational difficulties or low language skills to gain new experiences and skills that empowers them and help them forward in their life.

We have built up well working and trustable networks with actors who work with young people with fewer opportunities. The networks are well set up with annual meetings and common strategies and we have worked several years on building up support measures for young people with fewer opportunities. We all share the values of Council of Europe and work for equal rights for each and every one.

7. Please explain who are the partners, what exactly is their role and what is their concrete contribution to the initiative.

*(Max 10 lines)*

This project is realized with our partners from ENYC (European Network for Youth Centres), Platform (network for European youth activities) and Rückenwind (network specialized in young people with fewer opportunities).

The partners have select volunteers that benefit the most from participation, support them during the preparation stage, in some cases they send a support person along with the volunteer to ensure a good start in a foreign country. They keep contact with their volunteer during the volunteering period and after returning they organize evaluation meetings and support and plan future steps.

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8. Which are the main results – if already visible – resulting from the described initiative; and how do you imagine the continuation of this action?

*(Max 10 lines)*

During the project, 180 children from local kindergartens visited our Centre and took part in the Elf path. 60 pupils took part in the Elf school. We also organized a family evening and 250 persons took part in this activity.

The feedback from visitors was very positive; the children liked the program, became curious about other cultures and learned new games, songs and expressions from the volunteers. Feedback from the volunteers indicated that they learned new skills, developed their cultural and social competences, improved their language skill.

Villa Elba got positive visibility in the local community through the newspaper articles, television news and in social media and this resulted in that we could bring forward our mission, values and services for different groups. The project helped in internationalization at home, as local people got possibilities to interact with people from other cultures.

9. Please provide some details on how you raised the resources for the initiative. (This is not an element to be judged by the jury – however, it is important to readers of our Yearbook in which eligible initiatives will be presented.)

*(Max 5 lines)*

For the mobility costs we apply funding from Erasmus+ Youth in Action programme, in Finland the Finnish National Agency for Education administers this programme. Villa Elba stands for administration costs and we put our working time on planning and implementing the project.