

SHARE YOUR VOLUNTEERING EXPERIENCES!

As MaaIlmanvaihto's volunteer you will gain a unique view on the life in Finland and intercultural learning, among other things. It would be great if you wanted to share your experiences and thoughts with a larger audience. Why? For instance,

- it may be beneficial for your learning as it encourages you to really think about aspects related to your volunteering period.
- your audiences may get a better and more detailed understanding about how people live and how things are both in Finland and in your home country.
- it can help to spread information about international volunteering to those interested in becoming volunteers.
- it can increase understanding between different actors of international volunteering – volunteers, host families, support persons... For instance, your messages can serve as peer support for other volunteers.

Keep reading for tips and instructions on how to share your experiences!



HOW TO SHARE EXPERIENCES ETHICALLY

A topic that you will surely end up telling about is interacting with the locals. When doing this, think about what impressions your audiences may get from your messages on the people you tell about and more widely on your volunteering country – its people, cultures, society and environments. Here are some factors to consider:

What is your topic – and your perspective on the topic?

- Who or what is portrayed as the active subject in your text (or photo or video) and who or what is portrayed as the passive object, the target of actions? To whom are you giving voice? What things in relation to your topic have you not mentioned in your text? Why is the setting as it is?
- One of the central aims of Maailmanvaihtos' activities is to advance intercultural understanding. Do you think your text does this (and in which ways)?

Publish factual information

- Research things properly and be critical of your sources. It is often even difficult for experts to get a complete grasp about complicated subjects.
- Make sure your opinions are clearly opinions and cannot be interpreted as anything else. If you notice after publishing that your text contains false information, correct your mistake!

Respect privacy

- In short: do not publish any personally identifiable information about people or entities without their permission. It might be useful to think before publishing about how you would feel if your material told about you.
- Respecting privacy is especially important when telling about people in a vulnerable position. If the person is underage, consult also their guardian. The same applies if an adult person, a disabled person for instance, has a guardian.

Photo and video permissions

- When filming or taking pictures at a private property (such as your host family's home) make sure an authorized person (usually the owner of the place) gives you permission to do this and publish these pictures or videos.
- When filming or taking pictures of a person make sure that they give you permission to do this and publish the photos or videos. If the person is underage, you also need a permission from their guardian. The same applies if an adult person, a disabled person for instance, has a guardian. At your voluntary workplace it is good to consult your mentor about how to get the needed permissions.
- Note that you also need permission for all the personal information that you want to publish. For example, if you want to tell the name of a person in a picture that you took, you will need a permission for this.
- Make sure you clearly tell involved people or entities where and how your material is going to be published. For example: "The picture will be published in my blog where I talk about my voluntary work period. This blog could reach a wide audience, especially in Finland, but maybe even worldwide."
- If you were not the one behind the camera, you need permission also from the one who took the pictures or filmed the videos. Whatever you are publishing, don't plagiarize or break copyright rules, and give credit to creators of the content that you are using!

Share your messages!

- Many of the people or entities that you talk about in your text would be happy to see the material that you publish about them! At best, some might even be able to use that material. This is why it is always nice if you share your material with those that it concerns.

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCES IN A BLOG!

We gladly link blogs of our volunteers into Maailmanvaihto's website. So, we welcome you to start blogging and to share a link into your blog with us!

In the blogs that are linked into Maailmanvaihto's website volunteers tell about their experiences and thoughts on volunteering: about their role and tasks as a volunteer, adaptation to the local community and society, changes that may take place in themselves... What comes to travels and other free time activities, it is fine to talk about them, too, but we hope these topics do not become the main focus of the blogs.

How to get started?

- Make your blog. You can create your blog in whatever service you like. Here are some free ones: wordpress.org, blogger.com and livejournal.com.
- Send a link into your blog to the address tiedottaja@maailmanvaihto.fi Send also a short introduction on yourself, your voluntary work period and your blog as well as your picture (preferably a horizontal picture). We will add your material to this web address: www.maailmanvaihto.fi/en/category/blog

Tips for blogging

- Write a short introduction for you blog. If you like, you can mention that you are a volunteer with Maailmanvaihto. For instance: *"I am Venla McVolunteer. I am a 22-year-old person from Volunteerland. I am currently doing volunteer work in a kindergarten in Helsinki, Finland, and I came to Finland through Maailmanvaihto's program. In this blog, I write about my experiences related to volunteering!"*
- If you want, you can add a link in the blog to Maailmanvaihto's website: www.maailmanvaihto.fi.
- Pictures tell a thousand words and liven up your blog. Adding captions to these pictures helps the reader to interpret them. Videos can also be a nice addition to your blog – or maybe you want to do vlogging?
- While writing your text, think about the typical reader from your target audience.

- Make tempting titles. Think about what you are trying to say and what sparks the readers' interest. Make sure the title does not give misleading information about the texts' content.
- Try to make the text feel easy to read and flow: avoid very long sentences, but do not repeatedly use short sentences comprising of independent clauses.
- If you have a lot to say, it might be worth considering making multiple blog posts to cover the topic(s). If you end up with a long text, it might be good to use subheadings in it.
- Explain unfamiliar concepts and abbreviations. The reader could be anyone, and they might not have heard about the expression that you are using.
- A distinctive style of writing will keep the reader interested. Do not be afraid to show your personality and trust your writing skills!
- You can write in English, Finnish, your mother tongue, or some combination of them all.

Monthly ideas for blogging

August: Write about your voluntary workplace! What kind of an organization do you work in? What are its' main activities and objectives? What types of tasks will you be doing at work? What are your first impressions of being a volunteer? How was your on-arrival training?

September: Let's eat! What kind of food have you mostly been eating and with whom? Which are the local eating customs like? What types of meals are eaten during daily life and during celebrations?

October: What kind of place do you live in? Write something about your host family or living community! What are the differences and similarities between your current and former living arrangements?

November: Tell us about your role as a volunteer. What is your typical working day and daily schedule like? How do your tasks at work advance intercultural learning and understanding?

December: What sorts of celebrations are there during this time of the year? Which kinds of celebrations are there in the country in general? How (and when) does the year change?

January: Say something about learning the local language. What is the language like? What have proven to be the best ways to learn it? What has been the most challenging thing and the most rewarding things with this new language?

February: How was your mid-term camp? What has been the main thing that the camp offered you?

March: Tell us about your process of adjusting to the new cultural environment and facing your own prejudices.

April: What kinds of relationships have you made during your voluntary work period: what types of connections do you have with the local people and other volunteers? Maybe you could interview someone who you interact with a lot and add it to the blog?

May: How is daily life in your volunteering country? What do you think of the country now compared to how you saw it at the beginning of your voluntary work period? Which things have you learned about the country that have not gained much outside (in the media, for instance) attention?

June: What challenges have you faced and what methods have you used to overcome them? What have you learned from these challenges?

July: What type of thoughts do you have now that you are heading back to your home country?

August: What did you gain from volunteering abroad? What impact your volunteering period had, in your opinion, on yourself and on other people? What would you like to say to those thinking about heading abroad for a voluntary work period? What is, in your opinion, the meaning of international voluntary work and what can be achieved through it?

TIPS FOR PREPARING FOR AN INTERVIEW

Are you getting interviewed by the media? Great! Here are some tips to get you prepared.

It is good to prepare for an interview by thinking about what you wish to say or talk about. Maailmanvaihto's aim is to advance intercultural understanding. Maybe you would like to bring forth this aspect of your volunteering period in the interview?

The journalist has the right to construct their text from whatever perspective they want and to pick whatever statements they want to be included in the text that they publish. That is why it is good to be careful about what you say. Even short statements can play a central role in the eventual journalistic piece.

Journalists are not allowed to publish false information, however. You have the right to check what is going to be said about you in the text before the text is published, and this is generally a good idea. Remember that it is also always possible that what you said in the interview is misunderstood.

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When talking about your volunteer work experiences, respect the privacy of the people and entities that you mention. Do not give out personally identifiable information without prior authorized consent that was given specifically for the interview.

In addition, give for the journalists only photos or videos that you have permission to give both from the people in the photos and the photographer (for more details, see chapter “How to share experiences ethically”).

If you are asked questions about Maailmanvaihto's operation that you are unable to answer, please ask the journalist(s) to contact Maailmanvaihto's office.

SOCIAL MEDIA

If you publish social media content on your volunteering period, you can get more attention for your post by adding hashtags such as #maailmanvaihto, #icyefinland, #icye and #evs.

Please tell to us at Maailmanvaihto about your interesting social media posts if we do not otherwise react to them! We will gladly share suitable posts by our volunteers on Maailmanvaihto's social media accounts but we may not always initially notice them.

In addition, we welcome you to follow, comment, like and share Maailmanvaihto's social media content! We currently have an account in Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn – and most recently in YouTube. It might be interesting for you to follow the social media of other international volunteering organizations, such as other ICYE organizations, too.

You are welcome to send us material – like photos and videos – to be published at Maailmanvaihto's social media channels. Please send your material to tiedottaja(at)maailmanvaihto.fi. And hey, let's keep in touch! All of Maailmanvaihto's office workers have their own work Facebook account, and you can contact us there. We are always happy to be contacted!



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MAAILMANVAIHTOA – VOLUNTEERS' VOICES

MaailmanVaihtoa – Volunteers' Voices is Maailmanvaihto's magazine that is published twice a year. The purpose of the magazine is to act as a channel for sharing cultural experiences and learning from these experiences.

- The newsletter is mostly made by volunteers.
- The magazine is published both in a printed and electronic form.

A lot of the articles are in Finnish, but the magazines contains stories in English, too. Would you be interested in contributing to the magazine? We would be happy to receive your story, interview, drawing, comic strip...! Please contact editor-in-chief Anna Lemström for further information: anna.lemstrom(at)maailmanvaihto.fi

See the archive of the magazine:

www.maailmanvaihto.fi/en/maailmanvaihto-icye-finland/maailmanvaihtoa-volunteers-voices