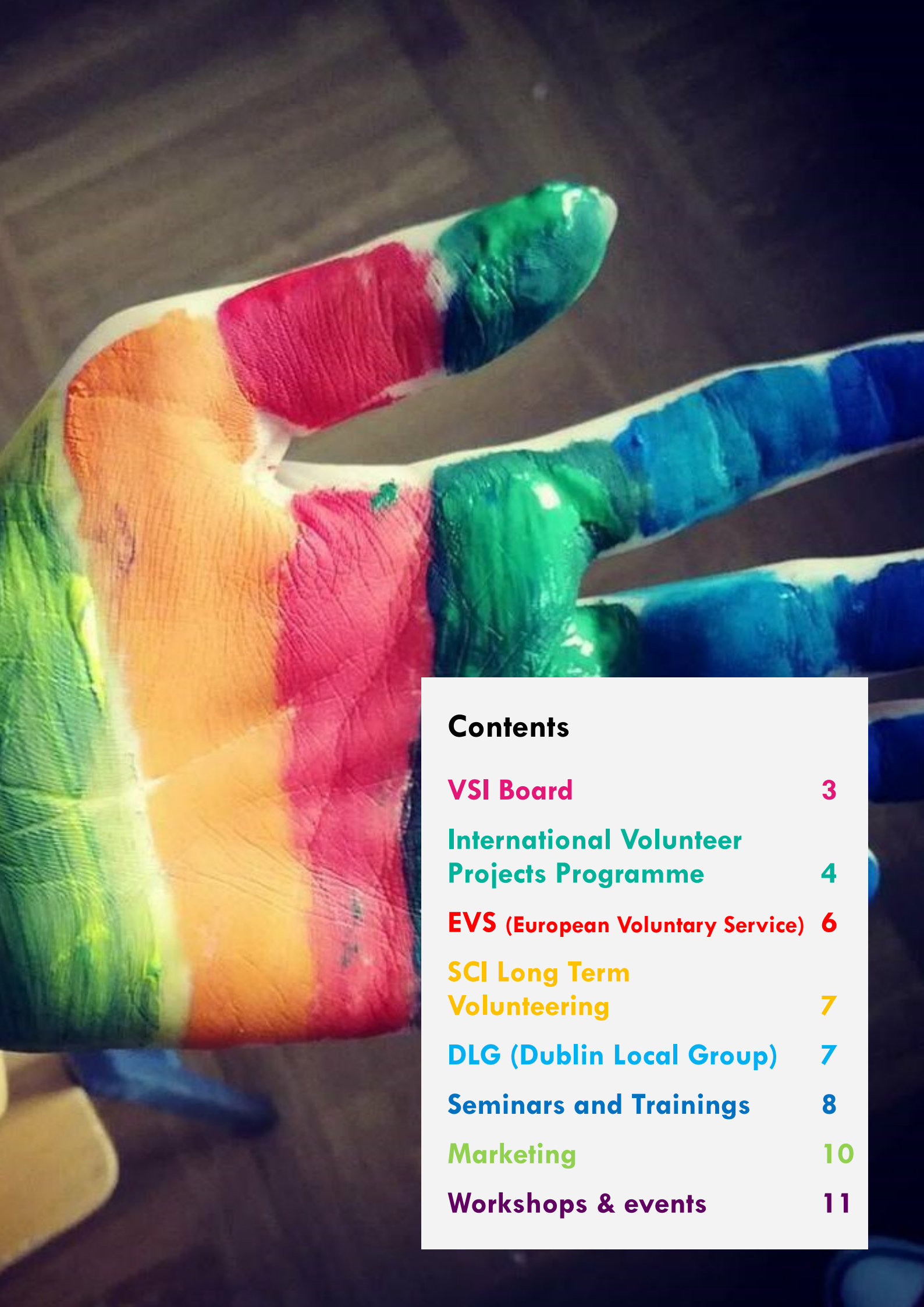




Annual Report 2017



**Voluntary Service
International**
www.vsi.ie



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VSI Board

The 2016 AGM was held in Dublin at the beginning of December. 26 members were present at the meeting. Along with the formal AGM, VSI held a farewell party for Tom Ryder, who retired as the head of VSI in October 2016).

VSI is governed by its members, through the Annual General Meeting, which elects a board of directors to manage the organisation on behalf of its members. The Board met 6 times during the year. Members of the VSI Board in 2017 were Aisling Twohill (Chair), Thomas McGarvey (Treasurer), Siobhán Sleeman and Myles Keogh. Myles Keogh stood down from the Board in November.

We acknowledge and greatly appreciate the generous support from:

- The Department of Children and Youth Affairs



- Léargas



- The Erasmus+ programme the European Union programme for education, training, youth and sport



Staff Team

Helen Walmsley - CEO

Mateja Jakšić - Volunteer Programme Coordinator

Sylwia Molenda - IVP Placement Officer
(EVS volunteer from June 2017)

Cati Ana Moragues - Marketing & Communications Officer (EVS volunteer from April 2017)

Jason Dillon - Youth Worker (May - October 2017)

Carol Lynch - Administrator (April - June 2017)

Ella Hutzler - Intern (February - May 2017)

The Board would like to express gratitude to the staff team who over the year have approached their work in a professional and enthusiastic manner.

The Board would also like to acknowledge the effort that volunteers put into VSI and thank them for their great work, motivation and energy in 2017.

We would like to thank:

- All our volunteers, activists and committee members
- Sponsoring and co-operating organisations
- Department of Children and Youth Affairs
- Erasmus + Programme via Léargas
- Howlin O'Rourke (auditors)
- HSE
- SCI Branches and the SCI International Secretariat.

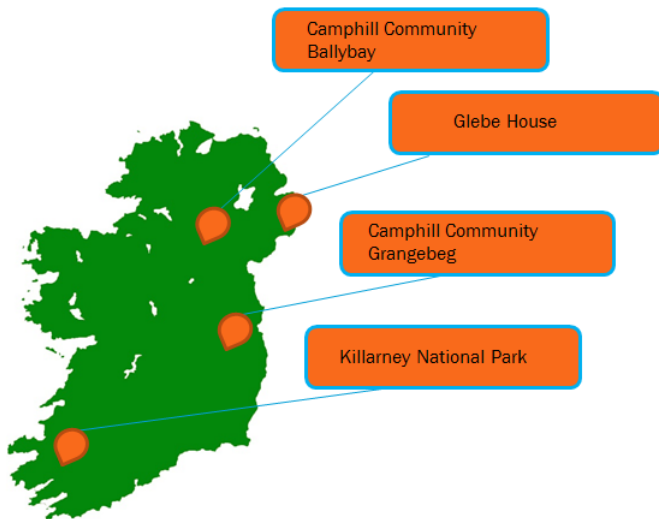


Left to right, up to down: Cati Ana Moragues, Sylwia Molenda, Helen Walmsley, Mateja Jakšić, Carol Lynch and Jason Dillon.

International Volunteer Projects Programme

SCI International Volunteer Projects (IVP) in Ireland

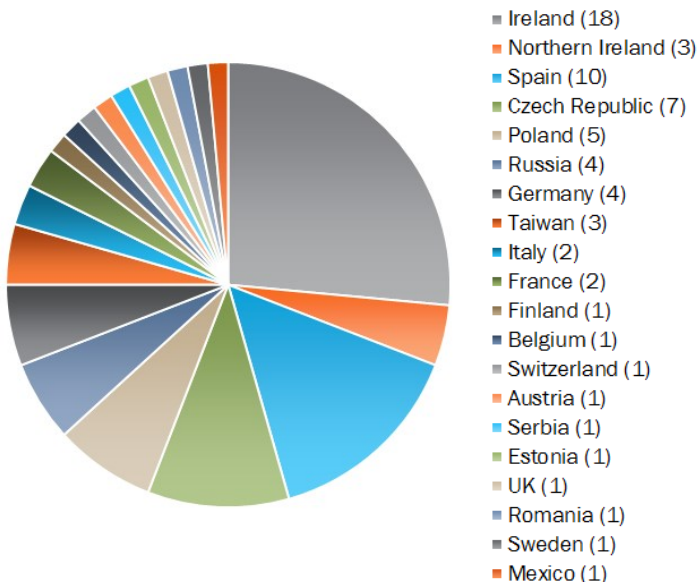
VSI organised 8 international short-term projects in Ireland, north and south, during 2017.



"Volunteering in Ireland was really special. We felt very welcome. The whole experience was great!"

Magda, volunteer in Camphill Community Grangebeg

The International Volunteer Projects (IVP) programme hosted a total of 68 volunteers from 20 different countries.



"I fell in love with Ireland! And the most important – I started to speak English and after this time I'm not scared of alone trips to another countries."

Volunteer in Glebe House

- **Killarney National Park x 4, Co. Kerry**

VSI volunteers helped all summer fighting the invasive rhododendron plant.

- **Camphill Community x 2 (Ballybay, Co. Monaghan and Grangebeg, Co. Kildare)**

VSI volunteers worked in the gardens, helped the Communities with minor works and ongoing projects such as building a great new swing for the residents!

- **Glebe House x 2, Co. Down**

VSI volunteers helped to organise the Open Day event, and also helped with gardening and cleaning up after the summer programme for children.



"I learned about Ireland and about a lot of different countries. I've also reinforced the idea that volunteering is one of the best things you can do."

Volunteer in Killarney National Park

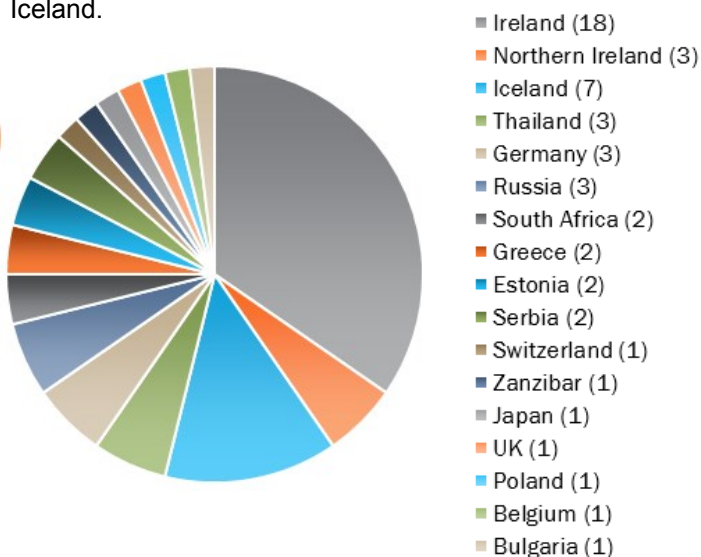
- **Mid-term Activity Camp for children resident in Mosney Accommodation Centre, Co. Meath**

VSI in cooperation with Maynooth University organised a Mid-term Activity Camp for children resident in Mosney Accommodation Centre. 61 children between the ages of 4 and 13 took part in the activities with 20 volunteers, mostly Maynooth Primary Education students.

SCI International Volunteer Projects (IVP) Abroad

In 2017 VSI sent 52 volunteers on short-term International Volunteer Projects. Out of 17 different countries that volunteers travelled to this year, many volunteers decided to volunteer in an international environment in their own country - Ireland and Northern Ireland. Among them there were VSI coordinators who did a great job supporting volunteer groups and introducing incoming volunteers to Irish culture. Thank you VSI coordinators for your great work!

After the native land, the next most popular destination was Iceland.



The volunteers worked in a variety of areas. This year the most popular were projects related to environmental protection. Our volunteers also chose projects related to community living, work with children, with refugees, art, culture and history.



Kevin, a VSI volunteer, at his last volunteering project restoring the fortress in Serbia

IVP events

Every year VSI holds Preparation and Evaluation Workshops. This Year, in April and June, we organised two Preparation Workshops to get our volunteers ready for their international volunteering adventures.



Volunteers at the Preparation Workshop in April.

In September, we organised a 'Volunteers Get Together'. This event was a great chance for VSI volunteers to meet like-minded people, share stories from their projects, reflect together on their experiences and the meaning of international volunteering.



Volunteers at the Volunteers Get Together Evaluation Workshop

We also organised a number of individual preparation, evaluation and information meetings with our volunteers, project coordinators and people interested in volunteering with VSI.

European Voluntary Service (EVS)

VSI enabled 13 volunteers to take part in European Voluntary Service (EVS) projects during 2017.

EVS is a fully-funded EU programme that gives young people (aged 18 to 30) the opportunity to volunteer in an organisation abroad. Volunteering projects can involve many different kinds of activities in areas such as youth work, cultural activities, social care or environmental protection. During their projects, EVS volunteers are provided with accommodation, food, a small personal allowance, language training and local transport.

Some of the 2017 EVS volunteers have already returned from their projects abroad, others have only recently started their EVS journey.

These are the organisations they have supported this year:

- **Projekte Vullnetare Nderkombetare (PVN), Albania**
Five volunteers cooperated with our trusted partner and SCI branch in Albania, Projekte Vullnetare Nderkombetare (PVN), working on human rights education with young people with fewer opportunities and organising short term summer International Volunteer Projects.

- **Pistes Solidaires, France**
Three volunteers travelled to our partner organisation Pistes Solidaires in France to engage and organise activities with university students.

- **World Without Borders, Belarus**
One volunteer is in Belarus working with young people in conflict with the law with the organisation World Beyond Borders

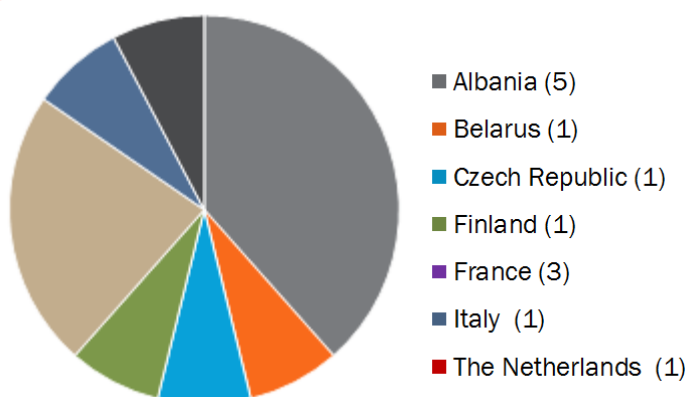
- **Lava Legato, The Netherlands**
One volunteer is working with Lava Legato in The Netherlands, supporting different organisations active in the social field.

- **Euromed Carrefour Sicilia, Italy**
One volunteer is in Italy (Euromed Carrefour Sicilia), promoting information about Europe, the EU and European funding programmes to young people.

- **Vanhamäki, Finland**
One volunteer is working on an organic farm and activity centre in Finland.

- **Prevent99, Czech Republic**
One volunteer is working with young people in the Prevent99 centre in the Czech Republic.

VSI also worked with EVS volunteers who started their projects in 2016 and returned this year from their projects with Alter Ego in Greece, Tools for Solidarity in Northern Ireland, One World Association in Poland, Roma National Council in Croatia, Amycos NGO in Spain and CRIJ in France.



Number of Irish volunteers per hosting country.



"It's been fantastic, learning and living in a new country and culture, experiencing new things and learning a new language."

Ruth, EVS volunteer in Belarus

"The EVS is such an amazing opportunity for young people to learn new skills and spend time learning in another country."

Catriona, EVS volunteer in Finland

EVS volunteers in Ireland/VSI

This year VSI is also hosting two brilliant EVS volunteers, Cati Ana Moragues (Spain) and Sylwia Molenda (Poland), who will stay with us until March and May 2018. Sylwia is working on our International Volunteer Projects and placing all of our amazing short term volunteers; Cati Ana is supporting us with Marketing and Communications, updating our social media and sending out those great monthly newsletters. They both are very much contributing to the lovely friendly atmosphere in our office and it's a privilege to work with them.

EVS in 2018

We are very happy to announce that we succeeded in securing funding from Leargas for a large Strategic EVS project, called 'Step Up', that will run to the end of 2020. The project focuses on inclusion and integration of all young people. 'Step Up' includes a seminar for participants and youth workers as well as a conference for youth organisations.

We are planning a group EVS in Albania in spring 2018 and we are currently working on a very exciting EVS project – arranging 3 short-term EVS projects in South America and Asia for the first time! VSI will be sending 3 young people to take part in 3-month long projects in Vietnam, Honduras and Cambodia early next year as well as hosting volunteers from Honduras and Cambodia in VSI. The volunteers will be working on projects involving teaching English in the local communities.

SCI Long Term Volunteering

This year our partners in Ireland and Northern Ireland hosted 2 long-term VSI volunteers: Théo, from France, went to Glebe House and Hau, from Vietnam, volunteered with Camphill Community Grangebeg. They did a great job this year!



Théo having fun in Glebe House.

Hau and other volunteers in Camphill Community Grangebeg cooking for the Intercultural Evening.



Dublin Local Group (DLG)

The Dublin Local Group (DLG) of VSI undertakes to improve the living conditions of elderly, disabled and marginalised 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, -cluttering, gardening and some small repairs.

Work requests are usually referred to DLG by Vincent de Paul, Friends of the Elderly, Care Local, ALONE and the Social Work Departments of Dublin City Council, the Health Service Executive and all hospitals in the Dublin City Area.

DLG meet each Saturday morning to carry out the work. We have a meeting after each assessment visit to make decisions on jobs and discuss future projects. also have a healthy social programme with regular outings.

In 2017 the group had 12 active and very committed volunteers. The group is mixed in gender and age and come from all parts of the world.

47 requests for assistance were received in 2017 of which 33 were assessed and 19 completed.

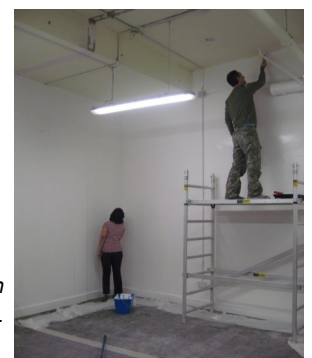
These projects have taken place all across the city and were very varied:

- Painting the hallway, stairs and landing of a single parent family in Clondalkin
- Major de-cluttering in a house in Cabra
- Cutting an overgrown back garden for a wheelchair user in Raheny

Our proudest achievement this year was to help a man referred to us by St Vincent de Paul in September 2016. In a joint effort with ALONE, we managed to get the DCC to do essential maintenance work in the house which took nearly a year. We were finally able to paint the house early summer 2017.

Our 2018 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 or phone the VSI office.



Volunteers from the Dublin Local Group at work.

Seminars and Trainings

At the moment of publication (December 2017), VSI has 80 members.

These, together with our staff, have the chance to participate in several trainings organised by VSI, the SCI network or by SALTO-YOUTH (a network of eight Resource Centres working on European priority areas within the youth field).

This year VSI staff and members have participated in the following trainings and seminars:

- **Creating Adaptive Tools for Youth Exchanges (CAT4Y), Greece - May 2017**

A member of staff and four VSI volunteers took part in this 8-day training course organised by VSI and its partners from Albania, France, Greece, Italy, Moldova and Spain.

The aim of the course was to learn how to adapt activities used in Youth Exchanges to include all young people, including those with physical disabilities and those with fewer opportunities.



Irish participants at their arrival in Greece.

- **Beyond Borders Seminar, Ireland - June 2017**

Last June, VSI organised and hosted a seminar with IVS-GB (the British branch of SCI), Tools for Solidarity and Glebe House, our partners from Northern Ireland.

During the seminar we discussed the potential impact that Brexit will have on our lives and on our work and we planned future projects together.

This was a first step in exploring the topic. We intend to arrange a follow-up project in 2018 with a wider European audience.



VSI, IVS-GB, Tools for Solidarity and Glebe House members at the Beyond Borders Seminar.

- **Opening minds to remove barriers! Seminar on Social Inclusion, Catalonia - June 2017**

VSI's Youth Worker took part in this seminar which was organised by our branch in Catalonia. The seminar's main objective was to provide tools to staff and volunteers who work on social inclusion of young people in their organizations across Europe.

Participants shared good practices on how to work with young people with fewer opportunities. They also learned how to establish strong local networks with other organizations with shared goals, with the aim of promoting volunteering opportunities to all young people. You can watch a video of their work here:

<https://socialinclusionsci.wordpress.com/videos/>



Seminar participants outside SCI Catalonia's offices

- **One last chance: Conflict Resolution, Poland - July 2017**

A VSI volunteer participated in this 6-day training course on conflict management. The training was aimed at giving participants an insight into a number of aspects surrounding the origins of conflict and how to tackle it.



Participants at the training learning to solve conflicts through games.

- **Mentoring from A to Z, Bulgaria - July 2017**

Our two current EVS volunteer mentors joined a group of 20 others for this 6-day training course. During the training they worked to develop and improve their competences as mentors in dealing with long-term volunteers.



Some snapshots of the training in Bulgaria.

- **Celebrating Human Difference, Germany - October 2017**

A VSI volunteer participated in this project. The aim of the project was to make outdoor education accessible to differently-abled participants.

During the 5 days, participants took part in a range of workshops introducing the theory of outdoor pedagogy and learned practical skills, such as designing activities.

"They gave me so much encouragement. I really enjoyed every minute with them."



Mary, VSI volunteer, enjoying her time at the training.

- **"Free to be you and me" - Courage and tools to create peace and safety for young people of all genders and sexualities, Germany - November 2017**

A member of staff and a VSI volunteer attended this 6-day training. The training aimed to increase the knowledge, skills and competences of the participants by equipping and enabling them to prepare and run thematic workshops on gender sensitivity & equality, gender violence, LGBTIQ, etc.

They learned how to design workshops to promote awareness-raising and motivate more young people to become active in fighting violence, stereotyping, discrimination and exclusion towards these target groups.



Our participants on their way to visit 'AB Queer' organisation.

Marketing

This year VSI has taken on board an EVS volunteer responsible for Communications and Marketing. This has allowed us to be more present both on social media and in events taking place around Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Here are some of the achievements of this year:

Social Media

The website, Facebook and Twitter have been the mainstay of our marketing during the year. We have been updating them regularly with interesting projects and events related to the world of volunteering.

Staff updates, volunteer stories and pictures have proven to be the most interesting content for our audience. We intend to keep you posted in the future with similar information!

Fairs and other promotional events



Volunteers and members of staff promoting VSI projects in 2017.

In 2017 we attended 11 Careers and Volunteering Fairs in several universities, where more than 400 people showed their interest in volunteering with us.

We have participated in 3 Eurodesk events in Co. Dublin, Co. Tipperary, and Co. Galway as part of the *Time to Move* campaign. This campaign aims to inform youth work professionals about opportunities for the young people they work with to volunteer, work, study and train in Europe.

VSI has also been invited to take part in various “Our Europe – Get Involved” workshops and similar events with young people about working, studying and volunteering in Europe.

Here we want to share with you the positive feedback we have received in the past months:

“I met one of your lovely folk at the University of Limerick last week, thank you for being so helpful and answering my questions.”

Interested volunteer, UL

“While I am yet to volunteer abroad, I have continuously thought about the potential out there since speaking with your very friendly and genuine ambassadors at Queens.”

Interested volunteer, QUB

“We got very positive feedback from the young people at the last workshop in Dún Laoighaire.”

Youth Information Service Kildare

Newsletters

Every month VSI's members and interested volunteers receive a newsletter with our current projects and other interesting information.

Newsletters are slightly different for members and non-members. Those for members include VSI Internal News, as well as special calls for seminars and workshops only open to them.

Ongoing Projects

• Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

VSI is upgrading! At the moment of publication (December 2017), we are developing a CRM system. This will help us keep track of communications with our contacts (volunteers, partners, etc.) and improve our relationships with them. We hope this tool will be especially useful for the person responsible for communications, and we expect to be able to use our new CRM by January 2018.

• New website coming soon...

VSI's website is in need of a brush up! That's why, over the past months we have been collecting information and working on the design of our new website. We expect to have the new website ready to go by mid 2018.

Workshops & events

VSI staff and members also attended many one-day workshops and events throughout the year. Here a few examples:

- **Dochas “How Change Happens” discussion**, covering a wide-range of topics, bringing participants from the Chiquitano people of Bolivia to drug services in Bluebell.
- **Trócaire & NYCI Climate Justice Workshop** which introduced activities and resources organisations can use with youth groups to explore climate justice issues
- **Young Voices events** which are creating space for young people and decision makers to meet to discuss and feed into youth policy at national and European levels together.

- **NYCI Youth Summit** which was an opportunity to hear young people's stories and reflect together on the Sustainable Development Goals.
- **Léargas Forum** celebrating international collaboration, with a specific focus on ‘30 Years of EU Citizenship’, where VSI staff showcased our work and participated in a “Recognising project impact” workshop.



Sylwia and Mateja during Léargas Forum project showcase

We also encourage current and former volunteers to keep engaged in the sector and in touch with other peers. This year Cathal, a VSI volunteer, was invited to give a talk with Sligo Volunteer Centre about his 3-month volunteer experience in Togo supporting health centre staff.



Mateja and Ella at Young Voices event

- **LYCS “Globalisation and Inequality” workshop** where we explored rising inequality in Ireland and around the world, its causes and consequences, and what can be done about it.
- **Peer Support Meeting**, where Signatories of The Comhlámh Code of Good Practice reflected together on their values and started the process of reviewing the Code.



Cathal and former VSI Coordinator, Tom Ryder, at the Volunteer Voices event in Sligo.



Over 25,000 volunteering
hours in 2017
by VSI volunteers!



Thank you
everyone!