

# ANNUAL REPORT 2019



# Voluntary Service International

## Annual Report

1 January to 31 December 2019

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Voluntary Service International  
20 Dominick Street Lower  
Dublin 1

[www.vsi.ie](http://www.vsi.ie)

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## Our Purpose

Voluntary Service International (VSI) is the Irish branch of Service Civil International, a worldwide peace movement that began in 1920. The aim of VSI is to promote peace, social justice, sustainable development and intercultural understanding through volunteering in Ireland and internationally. Our vision is a world where all people live together with mutual respect.

We achieve our aims through arranging and managing volunteering and non-formal educational activities internationally and in Ireland. VSI works with people of all ages and backgrounds and we focus our work on young people living in Ireland. Social inclusion is core to our ideology and in our work we include young people who are vulnerable and marginalised such as young people who are experiencing poverty or the care system, people with disabilities, migrants and asylum-seekers as well as improving the living conditions of vulnerable elderly people. We also bring people together through our programmes to form diverse groups to promote integration. Our work focuses on raising awareness of rights, peace and social justice, sustainable development, the environment and intercultural understanding; fostering active citizenship and promoting civic engagement; developing skills and competencies that enhance employability and promoting social inclusion.



Our volunteers on an international course for facilitators in Vienna



## Chairperson's Statement

I was delighted to join the board of VSI in mid-2019 and was honoured to be nominated by fellow board members to the role of Chair shortly afterwards. My background outside of work is heavily weighted towards volunteerism, having worked with numerous locally based volunteering groups since my youth as well as international organisations, and now commencing with VSI at a critical junction in this organisation's history. Inspired by VSI's vision of a world where all people live together with mutual respect, I am hoping to be able to bring some of my core strengths from my day job into the role of Chair of VSI, focussing on long term sustainability of the organisation, commercial reality and on future medium strategy, which I am hoping I can bring from 20+ years in the ICT & volunteering sectors.

In 2019 VSI faced some difficulties, including having to navigate our way through some financial challenges. It was also a year where there were significant changes at board level, with a number of new skilled and dedicated people putting themselves forward to support the organisation, for which we are very appreciative.

After many years in Mountjoy Square we took a decision to move our head office to Dominick Street in April 2019, and are now in the beautiful Georgian building that also houses Youth Work Ireland. Some of our amazing VSI members and volunteers helped us with the move, whom we cannot thank enough.

In 2019 we commenced development of our website, thanks to a capital grant from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, we will continue working on this in 2020. Other highlights of 2019 include sending a European Voluntary Service group to Greece, we organised this as part of our EU-funded Step Up project. The project provided an opportunity for young people from Ireland to participate in a group volunteer project with our branch in Greece. They learned about peace, social justice, migrant issues, freedom of movement and interculturality. They developed their youth work and community work skills and increased their employability. This project was a great success and we would love to be able to repeat it annually.

2019 saw VSI's first activities in the new European Solidarity Corps (ESC) programme, also part of the EU-funded programme for youth. We are proud to be the employer of the first 'ESC Job' participant in Ireland. We also supported four young people from Ireland to participate in an EU-funded youth exchange in Catalonia. We haven't participated in a youth exchange for a few years and it was great to get back into it. In 2019 we increased our collaboration with the Eurodesk network in Ireland which has helped us to reach a wider audience and to inform more young people nationally about our opportunities.

We were delighted to continue our work in the Mosney residential centre in Meath, through our activity camps with children from asylum seeker families. Through this project we also provided vital experience and informal learning for Irish student teachers. In the beautiful Killarney National Park we enjoyed delivering our important work preserving the native oakwoods, providing opportunities for Irish and international volunteers to experience Ireland's natural heritage. A shout-out to VSI's Dublin Local Group, run entirely by our dedicated and committed volunteers, who throughout the year work on painting and decorating the homes of vulnerable people in the greater Dublin area.

VSI continues to operate into 2020 in a challenging environment in relation to resourcing and funding. 2020 brings increased regulatory and legislative challenges facing the community and voluntary sector, so the demands on VSI's resources will continue to grow. We endeavour to seek out alternative funding streams, however this brings operational challenges for us the board, and the newly formed strategy committee are committed to reviewing all current and legacy activities to ensure they are still fit for purpose and appropriate to VSI in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and in turn if they are financially viable to continue into the future, for future generations to come.

Finally, I'd like to thank the members, the board, staff and all volunteers, past and present for their commitment, contribution and continued support to VSI's work. I would like to call out the board members currently stepping off after fantastic service, and to sincerely thank the previous Chair of VSI, Aisling Twohill for her fantastic support over the previous number of years, I want to wish her our best for the future.

Jason Campbell, Chair of VSI

## Organisation and Governance

Voluntary Service International (VSI) is a limited company registered as Seirbhis Deonach Idirnaisiunta Cuideachta faoi Theorainn Ráthaíochta, having no share capital.

Company number: 40520

Registered Charity Number: 20023065

CHY (Revenue) Number: 9220

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20 Dominick Street Lower  
Dublin 1

Ph: 01 855 1011

[www.vsi.ie](http://www.vsi.ie)

<https://www.facebook.com/Vsilreland>

[https://twitter.com/VSI\\_Ireland](https://twitter.com/VSI_Ireland)

[https://www.instagram.com/vsi\\_ireland/](https://www.instagram.com/vsi_ireland/)

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 8 times during the year. Members of the VSI Board in 2019 were Cathy Boobbyer, Siobhan Crombie Jason Campbell (Chair), Robin Hanan (Vice-Chair), Amanda Hannan (Treasurer), Ian Carter, Liam Keenan, Ian McSweeney, Francis Bisset (resigned 8 May 2019), Thomas Mc Garvey (Treasurer, resigned 3 July 2019), Hazel Smith (resigned 30 May 2019), Aisling Twohill (Chair, resigned 3 July 2019) and Kate Van Der Merwe (resigned 28 August 2019). The Company Secretary in 2019 was Helen Walmsley.

The Finance Sub-committee of the board is chaired by Amanda Hannan, VSI's Treasurer and in 2019 Siobhán Crombie, Ian McSweeney and Kate Van Der Merwe also served on this Committee.

Board members are not remunerated and gain no private benefit from their role.

We held our AGM in Dublin on 29 June 2019, 12 members were present at the meeting.

VSI is a member of the National Youth Council of Ireland, of Dóchas, the Irish Association for Non-Governmental Development Organisations and IDEA, the Irish Development Education Association.

## Governance Standards

2019 was a year of learning and preparation for compliance with the new Charities Governance Code in 2020. We have built on our systems and processes already in place and in 2020 we will develop these with a new Charities Governance Code sub-committee of the board.

VSI is a signatory to the Dóchas Code of Conduct on Images and Messages and to the Comhlámh Code of Good Practice for Volunteer Sending Agencies.

## VSI staff and office volunteers

**Helen Walmsley** — CEO

**Mateja Jakšić** — Volunteer Programme Coordinator

**Malgorzata (Gosia) Zoladziewska** — Placement Officer (June 2019 — June 2020)

**Laura Paraschiv** — Administrator (December 2018 - November 2019)

**Shawna Gray** — Intern (March-June 2019)

**David Yonker** — Intern (June-August 2019)

**Jean Pierre Habarurema** — Work Placement Student (November 2018 - May 2019)



## Funders and associates

We acknowledge and greatly appreciate the generous support from:

- The Department of Children and Youth Affairs
- National Lottery
- Health Service Executive
- The Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes — European Union programmes for education, training, youth and sport
- Léargas
- Private donors



Erasmus+



### **We would also like to thank:**

- Sponsoring and co-operating organisations
- Roberts Nathan (auditors)
- SCI Branches and the SCI International Secretariat

## International Volunteer Projects (IVP) programme

IVPs are a unique form of volunteering, bringing together people from different countries, cultures and backgrounds to live and work together on short-term projects with local communities worldwide.

The projects are designed to assist and encourage local initiatives that will be continued when the volunteer project is completed. The projects help these groups in their long-term work for a more just, environmentally friendly and peaceful society. The projects also aim to break down barriers between people and to develop intercultural understanding – by learning about the cultures of volunteers in the group through discussion, themed free-time activities and cooking traditional meals for each other.

The programme is made up of four stages: preparation (pre-departure) training, volunteer projects (in Ireland or abroad), evaluation and using your experience.

### IVP abroad

In 2019, VSI sent 20 volunteers from Ireland on a variety of projects in 17 different countries – the work they did ranged from environmental protection and climate justice, through arranging educational activities for young people and working with people with disabilities to community development projects.

“I learned so much about people with learning disabilities, about other cultures and ways of life. It made me more independent. I really enjoyed the experience.”

*Mary, volunteer with people with disabilities in Slovakia*

“I learned a lot about Arabic and Islamic society, and have come away much more interested in other cultures & religions. I found my love of teaching again, and working with people. Taking part in the project made me feel that anything is possible, and that time is precious. It made me evaluate my life in Ireland and the extent to which I am contributing to a more equitable world.”

*Michael, teaching volunteer in Palestine*

# Countries where our IVP volunteers did their projects

- Iceland
- Japan
- India
- France
- Belgium
- Switzerland
- Spain Catalonia
- Serbia
- Tanzania
- Estonia
- Portugal
- Finland
- UK (Scotland)
- Sweden
- Czech Republic
- Slovakia
- Palestine



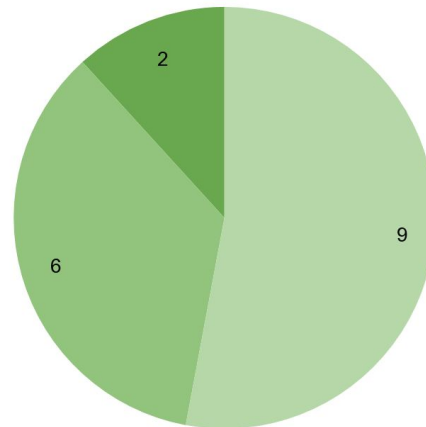
Mary on her project in Slovakia

## IVP in Ireland and Northern Ireland

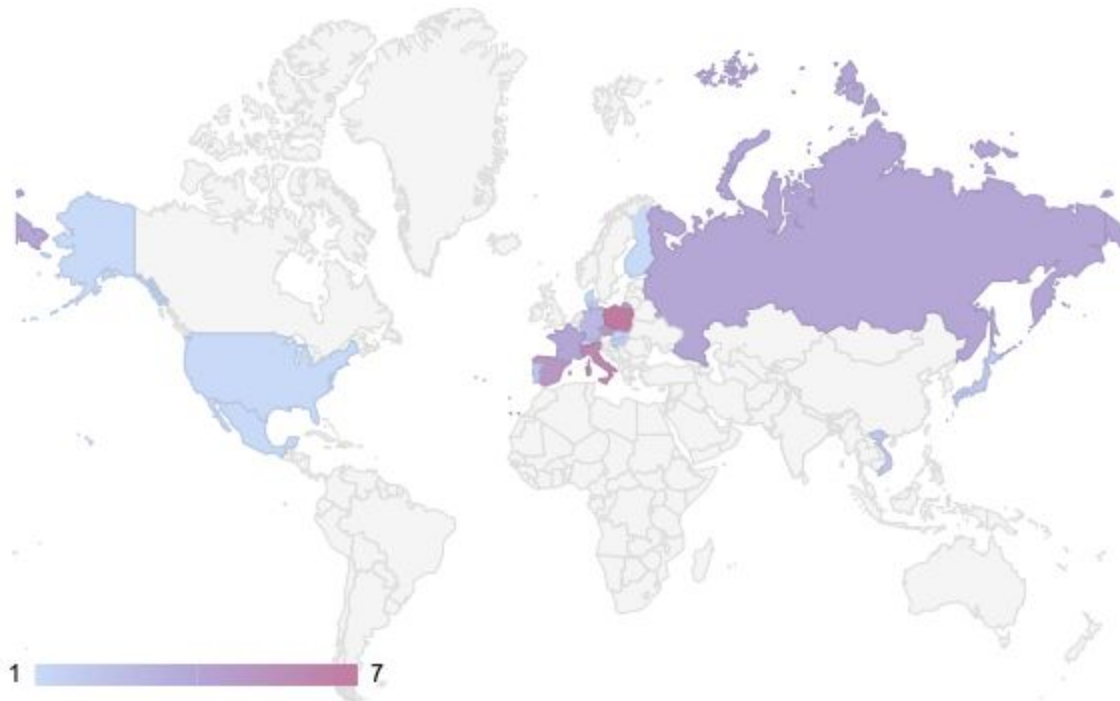
Instead of going abroad, some volunteers do IVPs on the island of Ireland. 17 VSI volunteers (including seven International Volunteer Project Coordinators) took part in our local projects.

Age of Irish residents volunteering in Ireland with VSI

- 18-25
- 26-35
- 36-45



Between June and September 2019, VSI organised and managed seven International Volunteer Projects with local organisations in the Republic and Northern Ireland and besides the local volunteers, we hosted 48 international volunteers.



Countries  
that have sent volunteers to Ireland





International team of volunteers in Killarney

- Killarney National Park Woodland Conservation Project, Co. Kerry x 4  
Volunteers worked alongside the Park rangers throughout the summer, helping with invasive rhododendron plant control in the National Park. VSI recruited and trained seven Volunteer Project Coordinators, helping the projects run smoothly and facilitating group dynamics and intercultural learning.
- Ballybay Camphill Community, Co. Monaghan  
Volunteers worked in the gardens and the farm together with the Camphill co-workers and residents, and helped the Community with minor work and ongoing projects, the volunteers learnt about the Camphill movement.
- Glebe House, Co. Down x 2  
Since 1975, local and international VSI volunteers gather twice a year in this cross-community organisation to learn and volunteer. This year our volunteers helped to organise an Open Day fundraising event in May and helped with gardening and general clean up after the children's summer programme in September.

"I think that I became a more environmentally conscious person, due to the work that we did outside. I left the project with a desire to continue the tasks that we had been doing and to do some more environmental research."

*Feargal, community volunteer in Northern Ireland*

## Iolar Project in Mosney Accommodation Centre



Maynooth University students in Mosney

We organised a special summer volunteer project in the Mosney residential centre for asylum seekers in Co. Meath, in collaboration with the Froebel Department of Maynooth University. VSI has worked in the Mosney centre for many years and in 2017 we began collaborating with Early Education Lecturer, Aoife Titley. We now work with Aoife annually, bringing her students to volunteer in Mosney, engaging the children in meaningful free-time activities.

As in previous years, we planned to run both summer and autumn activity projects in the Mosney centre, but due to large scale construction works on buildings and playgrounds, unfortunately our autumn project was cancelled. We're planning to run both projects again in 2020.

This summer we delivered an educational and play project, over 100 children joined in, over five days in August. Activities included arts and crafts, making posters and collages about housing and children's rights; dance and sports and we even had a big talent show where everyone enjoyed different performances the children had prepared for each other. This project is very beneficial for the students as it raises their awareness of other cultures, peace and social justice issues, providing them with opportunities to enhance their teaching skills and increase their employability.



## EU funded programmes

### European Voluntary Service / European Solidarity Corps

For a number of years VSI has both coordinated and partnered in European Voluntary Service (EVS) projects, both sending and hosting young volunteers abroad and in Ireland. This programme is funded by the EU and is currently part of the Erasmus+ programme. The EU has introduced a new programme: the European Solidarity Corps (ESC), which will replace the EVS programme. Just like the EVS programme, the ESC volunteering programme provides opportunities for young people to take part in a project with an organisation abroad and new in the ESC programme is the opportunity to volunteer in your home country. The programme funds volunteers' living allowance and accommodation, travel costs, insurance and language lessons. VSI immediately engaged in the new ESC programme and secured funding to host a local volunteer for 12 months in the VSI office. We also applied for the employment strand of the ESC programme and were the first organisation in Ireland to receive funding to host an ESC Job participant. We employed our Volunteer Programme Coordinator and the funding provided some organisational support, funds for coaching, training and competence development of the employee.

In 2019 we continued delivering our large Strategic EVS project, Step Up, focussing on inclusion and integration of all young people. Through this we sent a group of 8 young people from Ireland with an accompanying person, to volunteer with our branch SCI Hellas in Greece, this project focused on youth and community work with refugees. We also sent one short-term and one long-term volunteer on projects with our branch in Albania, long-term volunteer to Moldova and worked with another volunteer in Moldova who started the project in 2018. In 2019 we started arranging several individual short term projects, including one with a volunteer with disabilities to be accompanied by a personal assistant and two more group projects, all part of the Step Up project.



Group EVS in Greece

In addition to the Step Up project, we partnered on projects hosted by organisations from around Europe and during 2019 we supported 17 young people from Ireland to volunteer on other EVS/ESC projects in 12 different countries. In total 29 volunteers worked on a wide variety of EVS/ESC projects including youth and community work, youth information, work with refugees, work with elderly, human rights education, theatre, sports, environmental conservation and animal welfare.



Our volunteer Fiach and his fellow ESC volunteers releasing wild birds in Portugal

“My biggest advice to someone is to just do it, don’t hesitate, just go for it. I think when you go there that you’ll be on crazy adventures, you’ll meet amazing new people.”

*Jacky, human rights volunteer in Albania*

“Coming from a disadvantaged area, when I first got an opportunity to do this project, I felt this isn’t something that happens to people like me or what people like me would normally do. And then I thought, why can’t I do this just because of where I’m from, of who I am? This can’t define the opportunities I will get, so I said, ‘You know what? I’m gonna do it!’ And honestly, it was one of the best decisions I ever made.”

*Aaron, volunteer with refugees in Greece*

“The learning and training component of ESC Jobs is so beneficial. It enabled me to up my professional skills and competencies in areas of youth work, intercultural cooperation and project management, and to become better at what I do and love doing.”

*Mateja, VSI's ESC Job participant*

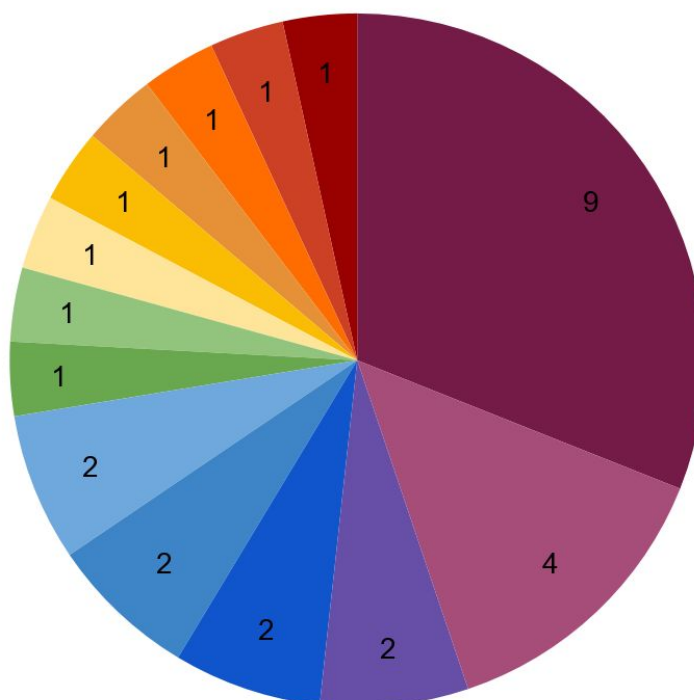
“International meetings and trainings were a little overwhelming at the beginning, but I learned quickly that no one is not qualified or not important enough to participate in one. It's the best to just start learning from wherever you are.”

*Gosia, VSI's ESC volunteer*

Here are the overall statistics for VSI's EVS and ESC volunteers abroad:

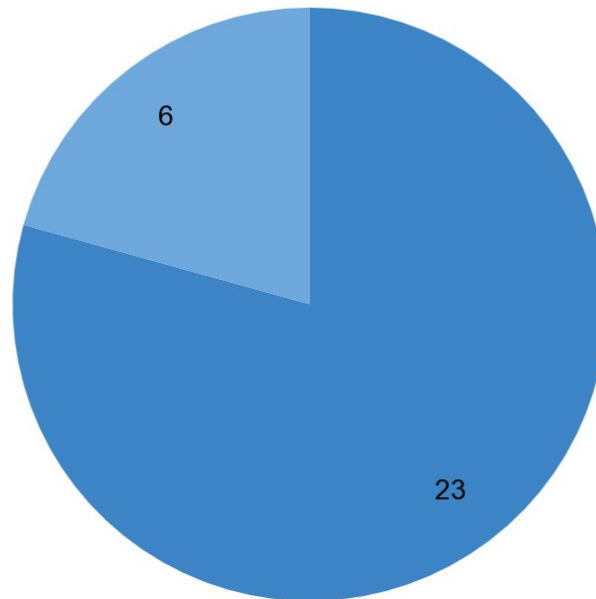
### Countries where our EVS/ESC volunteers did their projects:

- Greece
- France
- Moldova
- Albania
- Croatia
- Germany
- Norway
- Slovenia
- Spain
- The Netherlands
- Estonia
- Portugal
- Denmark
- Belgium



### Age of our EVS/ESC volunteers:

- 18-25
- 26-30



### Youth Exchange

A group of four young people from Galway participated in a Youth Exchange with our branch in Catalonia. Through non-formal education methods and with other young people from different countries the participants explored interculturality, sustainability and breaking gender and cultural stereotypes. The project also raised awareness on environmental issues by discovering life in the rural area where the participants stayed. VSI's Volunteer Programme Coordinator worked with SCI Catalonia and the group's youth worker from Youth Work Ireland, Ballinasloe to prepare the participants and support them throughout the project. We look forward to working with them again in the future.



## VSI Events

### 25 May: IVP Preparation Workshop (pre-departure training)

We held our annual Preparation Workshop for outgoing IVP volunteers on 25 May, we gathered volunteers from around Ireland to learn more about international volunteering and development education. Volunteers also shared their hopes, fears and expectations and heard stories from experienced volunteers.

### 5 October: IVP Get Together and Evaluation

We love hearing about volunteers' experiences and adventures, and at this annual event volunteers shared and evaluated their experiences with us and shared ideas of how their project made a difference.

### 8 - 9 June: Coordinators' Training and 23 November: Coordinators' Evaluation Day

In order to run our IVP projects in Ireland smoothly, we need the support of IVP volunteer project coordinators. Topics covered at our weekend training included group dynamics, communication skills, conflict management and the role of an IVP coordinator.

We gathered our coordinators together again for the evaluation, where the coordinators discussed and reviewed their projects. Their comments and contributions will be used for future planning of our projects.

### 27 May: Step Up Group EVS Pre-departure training and 21 September: Evaluation/Debriefing

We delivered a special pre-departure training with our group of young people to prepare them to volunteer in Greece. In addition to our general volunteers' preparation we covered child protection training and training on working with refugees. It was great to hear about their experiences in Greece on their return at the evaluation workshop.



VSI members, volunteers and staff at the 2019 VSI AGM in June

## Dublin Local Group

The Dublin Local Group (DLG) of VSI undertakes to improve the living conditions of elderly, disabled and marginalised people living in Dublin. We only help out in situations where the living standards of a person or family has fallen well below the general and acceptable levels and where people are unable to help themselves for whatever reason (physical, social, mental, or financial situation).

Our group is made up solely of volunteers. We are not professionals but we are committed to completing any work we execute to the highest standard. We have many long-standing members who have gained valuable experience along the way.

DLG is mixed in gender, age and comes from all parts of the world. Most of us work full-time Monday to Friday and are involved in very different fields.

The type of work we do involves cleaning, decluttering, painting, gardening and small repairs. This year, most of our work referrals came from the HSE, Social Work Departments of Dublin City Council, Focus Ireland or ALONE. All referrals are visited to carry out an assessment and decisions are being made by the group. We discuss and plan all our future projects and assign them priority numbers. Assessment visits and work are carried out on Saturdays only, 10am to 1pm.

Below are a few important figures for DLG in 2019 DLG:

- We had 12 active and very committed volunteers, including 3 new members
- We received 32 requests for assistance of which we visited 22 and completed 15
- We spent 34 Saturdays volunteering

Our projects have taken place all across the city and varied in nature from painting and gardening jobs. One unusual request had us involved in helping a young woman settling in her first home after residing in care. We helped her assemble all the living room and bedroom furniture (table, chairs, TV stand, chest drawers etc.) and it was a very rewarding job for us.

Our 2020 objective is to keep doing good and necessary local work in a fun and friendly atmosphere. More details on the group can be found on our website [www.dublinlocalgroup.org](http://www.dublinlocalgroup.org).





DLG member Andy painting a ceiling

“What a great group to be part of! Big hearted people who are so generous with their time and energy on busy Saturdays. Plenty of laughter, and the odd lively debate as well!”

*Éilis, DLG volunteer*

“When I think about all the positives I get from being involved with the DLG group and from the people we get to meet as part of our work, I feel a bit guilty because I get so much back from what is really such a small sacrifice of the time in my week.”

*Mike, DLG volunteer*

## International Seminars and Training Courses



Representants of SCI International Secretariat, branches and partners on the meeting in Albania

In addition to volunteering and our other activities our members, volunteers and staff also engage in non-formal and informal learning activities. In 2019 staff members attended training courses exploring learning outcomes for volunteers and youth empowerment in Ireland, an evaluation seminar in Vietnam of a multilateral EVS project and a seminar in Germany on inclusion in the new ESC programme. Mateja and Gosia attended the annual SCI volunteer projects evaluation meeting in Albania. Our members participated in seminars in Germany on representing values in our food consumption, in Spain on involving young people with fewer opportunities in the ESC programme and in Austria on exploring the use of humour in non-formal education and youth projects.



Mateja at the multi-lateral EVS project evaluation seminar in Vietnam



## Other VSI activities

Over the year staff, board members and volunteers attended various meetings with affiliates and funders, these included a celebration and a Project Management Day for the European Solidarity Corps, NYCI Specialist Organisations and Heads of Organisations meetings; meetings with the DCYA as a recipient organisation of the Youth Service Grant Scheme, Child safeguarding and Garda Vetting training, various Eurodesk meetings and events and Comhlamh Peer Support meetings for the Code of Good Practice.

We love meeting potential volunteers and informing them about our projects and so we attend volunteering fairs and give talks around the country. In 2019 these included:

- attending Volunteering/Careers' Fairs in Waterford IT, NUI Galway, UCD, Letterkenny IT and Irish Aid.
- giving talks/workshops in Liberties and Marino Colleges; Kildare Youthreach and Kildare Youth Services
- and holding an info stand in the Mosney centre.



Tom and Mateja at the Irish Aid Fair 2019, photo by Carolina Murari

# Financial Information

## STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2019

	Unrestricted Funds 2019 €	Restricted Funds 2019 €	Total 2019 €	Unrestricted Funds 2018 as restated €	Restricted Funds 2018 as restated €	Total 2018 As restated €
<b>Incoming Resources</b>						
Voluntary Income	8,890	141,221	150,111	1,836	126,246	128,082
Charitable activities	15,052	-	15,052	18,998	-	18,998
<b>Total incoming resources</b>	<b>23,942</b>	<b>141,221</b>	<b>165,163</b>	<b>20,834</b>	<b>126,246</b>	<b>147,080</b>
<b>Resources Expended</b>						
Charitable activities	17,163	121,807	138,970	29,450	123,615	153,065
<b>Net incoming/outgoing resources before transfers</b>	<b>6,779</b>	<b>19,414</b>	<b>26,193</b>	<b>(8,616)</b>	<b>2,631</b>	<b>(5,985)</b>
Gross transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Net movement in funds for the financial year</b>	<b>6,779</b>	<b>19,414</b>	<b>26,193</b>	<b>(8,616)</b>	<b>2,631</b>	<b>(5,985)</b>
<b>Reconciliation of funds</b>						
Balances brought forward at 1 January 2019	(9,868)	(28,299)	(38,167)	(1,252)	(30,930)	(32,182)
<b>Balances carried forward at 31 December 2019</b>	<b>(3,089)</b>	<b>(8,885)</b>	<b>(11,974)</b>	<b>(9,868)</b>	<b>(28,299)</b>	<b>(38,167)</b>

The Statement of Financial Activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the financial year.  
All income and expenditure relate to continuing activities.

# BALANCE SHEET

AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2019

	2019	2018
	€	as restated €
Tangible assets	<u>18,214</u>	<u>6,287</u>
Debtors	15,354	9,834
Cash at bank and in hand	<u>66,549</u>	<u>148,203</u>
	<u>81,903</u>	<u>158,037</u>
<b>Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year</b>	<u>(90,374)</u>	<u>(176,452)</u>
<b>Net Current Liabilities</b>	<u>(8,471)</u>	<u>(18,415)</u>
<b>Total Assets less Current Liabilities</b>	<u>9,743</u>	<u>(12,128)</u>
<b>Creditors</b>		
Amounts falling due after more than one year	<u>(21,717)</u>	<u>(26,039)</u>
	<u>(11,974)</u>	<u>(38,167)</u>
Restricted trust funds	(8,885)	(28,299)
General fund (unrestricted)	<u>(3,089)</u>	<u>(9,868)</u>
<b>Total funds</b>	<u><u>(11,974)</u></u>	<u><u>(38,167)</u></u>

*Approved by the Board of Trustees on 2 June 2020*

**OVER 22,000  
HOURS OF  
VOLUNTEERING  
IN 2019 BY VSI  
VOLUNTEERS**

*THANK YOU, EVERYONE!*