

**The project Rural Eco Lifestyle Unlimited has been accepted. We can host 1 EVS volunteer, we search one. Since ASAP till June 2016 here in Valec, rural area in Czech republic.**

**Annotation:**

AREA viva - Association foR Ecology and Agriculture realizes project Rural Eco Lifestyle Unlimited (RELU). Volunteer will spend 9 months in Valeč, co. Karlovy Vary since Feb. 2016. According to the official assessment it is a geographically and socially excluded locality: local young either already left to the towns or remained without motivation and perspective. Volunteer will become linking element between locals and thematic areas of AREA viva. The aim is to activate youth from Valeč in building construction from alternative materials, organic farm flow, workshops or other soft activities. The volunteer will also go through a learning process when organizing seminars, participating in coordination WWOOF and related PR activities. The whole motto is "learning by doing". 9 months long stay in rural area offers great challenge: the clash of different cultures in the undiscovered scenery and a foreign language environment. The challenge will be to create space in these scenes for solidarity and tolerance among young people, and what is more, their openness to the idea that they themselves can and should step out, go for an experience and bring to use new skills back in their homeland eventually. We are looking forward volunteer's arrival. Regarding our experience with EVS volunteers, we believe that Valeč would become nice open place to live.

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**Intro:**

AREA viva, z.s. - Association foR Ecology and Agriculture was founded in 2001 to support sustainable forms of agriculture and development of rural areas, and to promote organic issue in Czech Republic.

We would like to welcome here young people interested in environmental issues and sustainable lifestyle in rural area. During the selection procedure we do not focus on big theoretical base and previous knowledge. We appreciate candidates who are actively interested in his living environment and responsibly reacts on incoming inputs.

The most important target group of our activities are youth: teenagers and students. We comprehend them as those who want to develop themselves and widen the possibilities for upcoming live way. We use methods of non-formal education when running programmes for youngsters. Since AREA viva, z.s, moved its site to Valec (2009), has started to focus on locals, i.e. we support active citizenship in location officially recognized as socially, economically and geographically excluded.

Valec is small but vivid place with many various activities and events (music, theatre and travel festivals, planting trees project, supporting settlement...). Most of them are realized by young people who came to spend part of their life here. They have languages and are open to other initiatives. These people work as great pool to pick suitable volunteers' Mentor.

On the other hand there are local youth with no motivation to do anything. There are no reasonable opportunities in simply achievable distance, so that most youngsters leave rural area and go to towns. Their abilities to succeed are weak so they are exposed to danger of whatever abuse. The volunteers in a position of anonymous should liven up youth element more freely.

There is close collaboration with small organic farm Biostatek that is run by chairman of AREA viva, z.s. Vojtech Vesely and his family. Biostatek supplies facilities for whatever social farming

programmes realized by AREA viva, z.s. (environmental education, workcamps...). We use fully equipped office to coordinate soft projects and many other bookwork activities.

Since 2009 AREA viva, z.s. has been realizing annually:

Work-camp, 10 mostly foreign volunteers, 2 weeks long stay,

2-3 weekend volunteering stay for up to 15 participants/each,

Public seminars and workshops (pruning trees, producing soap, processing wool, presentation of Social farming, volunteering in organic farms...),

Educational programmes for ca 500 children/year at the farm on topics of sustainability, sufficiency, environmentally friendly approach to natural sources...

Organic party to present activities to our supporters and friends

We want to continue with these activities on and

We run network containing 60 Czech organic farms and 250 domestic and foreign volunteers since 2003, which is called WWOOF ([www.wwof.cz](http://www.wwof.cz)).

Valec is the most beautiful village in region. There are many historical buildings and AREA viva, z.s. has its office in the most marvelous one: castle area itself. There is also seminary room for up to 50 visitors to realize meetings, workshops, seminars, parties, movie screenings...

### **Practical arrangement**

Travel to the place of the project will be organized by AREA viva, z.s. Most of the working activities are reachable on foot in less than 10 minutes from the place where volunteers live. For exceptional cases we have bike and motorbike, car use is limited. Other transport is done by public transport (buses and trains).

Dealing with mobility in rural area which has difficulties with transport will be part of the volunteer tasks.

First and second year (2016-2017) we are offering accommodation in the cabin and in the yurt.

Both are on the land of Biostatek. Spaces are equipped by furniture, dishes, have electricity and water connection. There is shared bathroom and represents alternative and comfortable

accommodation. For the second phase (2017-2020) when we reach 4 volunteers we will use capacities of EkoKemp DOUPOV, apartment 4+1 with two bathrooms (male, female) in an organic self-sufficient camping site provided by AREA viva, z.s. The site is currently developed and volunteers will be involved in its growth.

The organization is insured against accidents during the activities and personal liability. Instruction and explanation of the security and work safety is necessary before using the tools. Difficulty and responsibility of the tasks will increase according to the independency and self-confidence of volunteers. We also give advice for the risks concerning leisure activities. In case of serious problems we will get in touch with sending organization or with the family of volunteer. In case volunteer need a visa we can provide invitation letter.

During the first months volunteer will be in intense contact with the mentor, for this period we expect meeting once a week. We are prepared for adjustments if needed. This regular meetings will help with the orientation in the place, introducing local community, will support volunteers in case of cultural shock. After the first phase we will adjust the meeting according to current needs. This meeting will create the space for reflection and ongoing reflection of the learning process and development of the project.

We count with a lot of support from the side of the organization. We can help with creating new network of contacts in order to reach fluent acclimatization (young people from around, other foreigners and EVS volunteers). Language course is provided by Czech language teacher.

Volunteers have private lessons. After two years of cooperation we have very good experience on both the personal and professional level. We appreciate a lot strong support to integrate to local community.

We will use Youthpass and we are able to create or modify Europass CV. We use these two tools in order to monitor the learning process and evaluate it. We will organize regular meetings focused on evaluating the learning process of the volunteer. We consider Youthpass as an excellent tool for feedback which can accompany the volunteer during the whole project. Except national certificates we plan to use non-formal methods like Heroes Journey. On a daily/weekly basis will be used the web page of AREA viva, z.s. There is a special section called "EVS" which is managed by our volunteers. This part of the web serves as a blog (in Czech and English) accompanied by photographs and other graphic material.

## **Project context**

Location:

Valec is a marvellous baroque village in the county of Karlovy Vary (Carlsbad), Western Bohemia. It is placed on the south-east foot of the Doupov mountains. There is an agriculturally treated landscape (meadows, crops and orchards), partly in an organic way around the venue. There is a post-office, pub and basic food-stuff and other daily needed facilities. The closest supermarkets, banks, emergency etc. are in Podborany town about 15 km far from Valec.

Locals:

The village of Valec is settled by 300 citizens, mostly seniors. Youngsters moved to towns and come back hardly for weekends. Their English or other foreign languages are on a very low level. Just a few local families root here more than 50 years, so their positive approach to the surrounding environment is not that strong. Local authorities are not very keen on new things and whatever progress disturbs their easy governing.

Economy:

The amount of pocket money that the volunteer receives (EUR 3/day) is good enough for comfortable living. Czech Crown (CZK, Kč) is the official currency but some shops accept Euros. AREA viva, z.s. works with foreign currency, so it is simple to help.

Leisure opportunities:

Valec is a small village, not a city. There is a restaurant, a genuine spiced smoky pub, a cafe bar & info center Pradelna with an info center at the castle area. Roman Catholic church (service every Saturday). Unique baroque park with romantic elements is fully open and ought to be regularly visited. The closest swimming opportunity is an artificial pond 500m far from the venue, two amazing kaolin and granite flooded quarries are in a distance of 9 km. Football playground, horse trips and electronic darts are available right in the village.

Castle brewery Chyse is a great destination for all day trip. Brewery is producing unpasteurised beer from the best natural zatecky hop. Karlovy Vary (35 km) is a worldwide famous town for its spa, warm mineral streams and round biscuits. Several cinemas, dance and music opportunities and other places of interests are in a distance of 15 km. Enviro-classroom is equipped for audiovisual presentation (music, movies, computer games...), where volunteers can entertain.

There are also several festivals taking place in Valeč. Music and culture festival Povaleč is visited by 4000 people. There is Funny Moon Psy-trance festival, Blossom Celebration, Biopárty, Zcestovalec and other events which serve like an opportunity to meet people.

Cooperation: AREA viva, z.s. cooperates with many regional and international subjects. Beside Valec castle they are: APUS, o.s., ANNA KK, Karlovarsky county, Thuringer Oekoherz e.V., Conev, o.s., Zeleny kruh, Kinsky dvorec Chmelistna, Natura Miriquidica e.V., Povalec, o.s., Fundacja AgriNatura, Vestjytlands Højskole, South Bohemian University, VOS Jabok, Tranquillite, o.s. and others. AREA viva, z.s. runs WWOOF exchange network system for the Czech Republic, it is a member of Federation of WWOOF Organizations (FoWO) and in vivid and personal contact with national coordinators all around Europe and Australia, New Zealand, USA, Cameroon, Canada, India and Sri Lanka....

Nevertheless, the closest partnership has been set with an organic farm Biostatek where the programmes of environmental education take place. It is 500-1.200 school children per year for excursions and has been over 300 weekend or week long domestic and foreign volunteers since 2008. Biostatek organic farm hosts WWOOFers – dozens since 2008.

#### Community:

Whereas locals are quite in-initiative and unmotivated, there are many people curious of activities run by AREA viva, z.s. Since five years ago our place has been giving an impression of continuous community. Volunteers are generously welcomed to take part in.

We will introduce volunteers to group of active youth who bought land around to try self-sufficient living. These speak English or other foreign language, so they are good groups for first touch with active people in the region.

Organic farm Biostatek is a place, where Czech and foreign workcamp participants or WWOOFers come so it works as an environment for mutual cultural exchange.

There are regular community events and activities: Hovorna (Fri. 18:00, cafe Pradelna) for those who are politically active and Valec Weekly newspaper to share whatever text content. Highly related is Kinovna established by former EVS Baptiste: in Enviroucebna there is a community dinner and movie screening every Tuesday.. We suppose this activity open even for locals will be run by team of volunteers on.

Speciality of Valec is community house Blahodum (Blisshouse). It is open cultural house where a lot of people can meet, live and share - it is real nest for new ideas and projects.

#### Rules, preferences and restrictions:

We do not work on Sunday. We are tolerant, respectful and responsible. We also share rules kept by ERASMUS+ programme.

Smokers are not refused, smoking possible on reserved places.

#### **Proposed Activities**

Basic division of work consists in indoor (in the office and in the seminar room, both in Castle area) and outdoor activities (on Biostatek farm, in protected areas, at schools, ...). Volunteer will be involved in several international and local projects (WWOOF, eco-farm Biostatek, Ekokemp Doupov, Rural Mobility Solution, Educating adults about volunteering and organic food production on farm enterprises).

In the office work includes communication with partners, PR, actualization of our webpage and preparation of projects. There is possibility in enviroučebna to take part in organization of the film club focusing on environmental or human rights issues. It is a space of making workshops, language and cultural nights or having their meetings of children groups. Concrete role depends on initiative, talent and concrete ideas of volunteers.

Outdoor activities are linked to ecologic agriculture and its promotion. Main activities are production of cheese, processing of bee products, making apple juice, cooking from freshly harvested vegetables and herbs, taking care about the trees and sheep breeding. These work serves as a part of environmental education, school excursions, workcamps and other events. During summer actions for public there will be other possibilities for taking part in activities (workcamp, senior volunteering project, children camp for mothers with children, music festival Povalec, trips to WWOOF farms, Bioparty)

#### Involvement:

There are two project goals: educate the volunteers themselves and to enliven local small village community by their presence and activity.

#### Educational aspect:

AREA viva, z.s. provides opportunity to widen volunteers' knowledge, increase skills and gain new

competence on the field of working with youth, organic and multi functional farming, administrative work and communication.

Volunteers' role:

We expect the volunteers will gradually become an integral part our NGO working team. As we want activate volunteers' capacities we have selected particular activities to be realized by them.

Environmental education:

Volunteers will actively participate on school trips excursion at the Biostatek and castle park (showing, preparing surroundings...) Volunteers will generate methodical materials (work books, posters, memo cards...)

Farming activities at Biostatek:

The farm processes are integral part of AREA viva, z.s. work and educative background. We will identify what sort of farming activities suit to them and which would help to rise volunteers' capacities. The selection of activities is quite various as there are sheep, bees, orchards, permaculture garden...

WWOOF: There are activities linked EVS and network of hosts and volunteers interested in organic farming, self sufficiency, alternative building and rural development projects.

WWOOF trip: Possibility to visit hosts and assist them with their web profiles and PR issues.

WWOOF bookwork: picture galleries on [www.woof.cz](http://www.woof.cz), PR articles to foreign newsletters.

Organization of annual WWOOF host meeting

Ekokemp DOUPOV the aim of the project is to build gradually campgrounds in Valec that will serve as an ecological educational center. EVS volunteers interested in ecological building will gain valuable experiences during the construction phase (2015-17) and by running it later.

Rural mobility: venue of EVS mobility is officially recognized as geographically excluded location. Volunteers will participate on solving the problem in many respect so each volunteer will be able to pick part that suits to her/him.

Activities:

January and February: indoor book and computer work: writing projects, planning peak season, negotiating with partners, actualizing websites, promotion, PR, generating work books and other educational materials for environmental education.

March and April: preparing outside areas for environmental programmes, some handwork (planting, repairing the natural trail, making firewood for summer events, harvesting maple sap) mixed with indoor computer work.

May and June: excursions to Biostatek. Ca 700 pupils in average come to learn something about positive approach to natural environment using methods of non-formal and experiential education.

July and August: summer-camp for mothers with children, international exchange, work-camp. Presentation of environmental issues and running organic and vegetarian kitchen during music festival Povalec.

September and October: excursions for about 600 pupils again, pressing cider. Writing reports of summer actions. Preparing for the winter: some handwork (chopping wood, harvesting, treating trees...)

November and December: (snow and cold outside): indoor book and computer work: closing the projects, actualizing websites, promotion, PR, evaluating last season, improving work books and other educational materials for environmental education.

Working hours:

30-35 hours a week, language course and self-education included. Usually weekends off.