

Livonsaaren yhteisökylä, Finland

ESC PROJECT 2019

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This project is funded by



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Project in brief

Type of project

Helping in various tasks of an ecovillage, mostly outdoors, while living with the people of the ecovillage

Title of project

Island of Opportunity

Applying to volunteer in this project

If you are 18-30 years old and have not taken part in ESC or EVS volunteering period before, you can apply. Please send your applications until 17.02.2019 via email to livonsaari.evs@gmail.com. The participants will be selected until 28.02.2019.

Funding

The project is funded by the Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI) Opetushallitus.

Project reference number

2018-1-FI01-ESC12-060144

Dates

This is a seven month EVS project.

Begin date April 1st, 2019

End date October 31st, 2019

All of our volunteers are expected to participate for the whole period of seven months.

Venue

Livonsaaren yhteisökylä is an ecovillage. We are about 40 people living in the community.

We are located in the countryside, in the coastline of southwest Finland on the island of Livonsaari, which belongs to the municipality of Naantali. The island is situated 22 km west from Naantali town and 35 km west from the city of Turku. There is a bridge to this island.

Location in Google maps: <http://goo.gl/maps/oGdbI>

Travelling between the ecovillage and the city is arranged by bus, by a common car or by rideshare.

Participants

Five volunteers will participate, each from different nationality. We aim for balanced gender ratio.

Sending organisations

Name of organisation	Country	City
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Work

So far our former volunteers have among other things taken part in cultivation of vegetables in our organic garden cooperative, taken part in building new houses, helping to maintain, renovate and develop our communal buildings, making firewood, cleaning, cooking, participating in big and small events, promoting the ecovillage in a variety of public events, and hosting our visitors. We expect that our future volunteers will be doing similar tasks and possibly an even wider range of tasks.

Accommodation

The volunteers will be living in one of our communal houses. It is a conventional residential house built in the 1970's. It has a big kitchen and a big living room with fireplace. There are four rooms available for volunteers, the biggest one will be shared by two participants.

Food

Volunteers prepare their own meals from ingredients they buy from supermarkets in towns, and during the harvest season they also receive vegetables from our organic cooperative garden. Volunteers are welcome to organize the common lunches, which other villagers also take part in.

Pocket money and travel expenses

Volunteers receive pocket money 155 euros per month.
The project will also cover moderate travelling expenses between the ecovillage and the volunteer's home town.

Detailed info

The host, Livonsaaren yhteisökylä

Website: <http://yhteisokyla.net>

It is an ecovillage. The word ecovillage means an intentional community that aims to sustainable and more natural lifestyle, sharing of resources, voluntary work for common good, and active social life. This ecovillage is thirteen years old. We are now more than 30 adults and 13 children who live in this community. Every year more people join us and start a new life here. We own 66 hectares of land together, on which we build houses mainly from natural materials, using partly traditional and partly experimental methods. About ten residential houses have been completed, plus some are in construction, plus we have communal buildings.

We have a non-profit co-operative garden that produces a wide variety of organic vegetables that mostly go to customers in the nearby city, Turku. There are many other small businesses here, including construction, agriculture and practitioners of traditional alternative healthcare, to mention a few.

We receive visitors and volunteer workers, who want to see and experience our alternative and creative lifestyle. We are one of the successful ecovillages in Finland: we are growing, we have strong economy, we have recently bought more land and buildings, we have a very good reputation among the locals, among the public authorities, and in the ecovillage movement. We have a well functioning organisation structure and decision making systems, and we have enthusiastic and skilled people, who devote much of their time to serve the community. However, no one of our permanent residents is required to take part in working for the community, and the people have their privacy and run their own economies.

We want to both experiment and follow well-known principles on how to live ecologically and use the resources of nature in a sustainable way.

Let us define the main objectives of this ecovillage:

1. We want to create good resources for different beneficial activities to flourish, resources for people's creative endeavours that deal with:

- living in a natural way
- ecologically sustainable life
- ecological and natural building
- innovative building materials and techniques
- sustainable, innovative and beneficial small businesses that can also economically support the residents
- non-profit communal businesses
- civil actions of many kinds
- permacultural applications and experiments
- developing greater degree of self-sufficiency
- organising events of many kinds
- networking within the ecovillage movement and different intentional communities

2. We want to create a pleasant, well-functioning, beautiful, and original residential area for people who come to live here permanently and temporarily.

3. We want to create a showcase of a flourishing ecovillage that can inspire as many people as possible through visiting us, through word-of-mouth, and through media.

4. We want to be innovative and experiment with different ways of doing anything, and share all the know-how we have attained.

The communal real estate and equipment of the ecovillage is administered by a limited liability company, Livonsaaren yhteisökylä oy. The company owns the land and the communal buildings, and is paying back the bank loan that was needed to buy the place.

People who want to become permanent residents must at one point pay the company a certain sum of money to become full members. This means that those people buy shares (stocks) of the company. This gives a person the right to live the rest of their life within the ecovillage, and the right to get half a hectare of land for their own house. Currently the stocks that allow permanent residency cost 13500 €. The company also receives income mostly from renting indoor spaces and land.

Our experience as a host organisation

We have been a receiving organisation in seven EVS projects since 2012. Each year we have hosted two, three, four or five volunteers for five to seven months.

During the last few years we have hosted:

- 24 EVS volunteers
- More than thirty other young volunteers, including refugees who have applied for asylum in Finland. Most of those volunteers have come through the WWOOF system (Willing Workers on Organic Farms) and similar systems
- One international work camp

Accommodation and communal spaces

The volunteers will be living in a communal house called Alitalo. In addition to residents, some of our short-term volunteers and visitors may be using the kitchen of this house while living outside the house. This house doesn't have a warm shower. It will be available in another building, about 100 m away.

The community owns another communal residential building which is a former school building. In this building, besides residential apartments, there are communal spaces, including a sauna and a 60 m² former classroom that we use for meetings, parties, courses, and as a common living room. There is also the third communal building which has a separate sauna building available for everyone.

All of the communal houses are equipped with a broadband internet connection with wifi.

We try to arrange own private rooms for everyone, but at least two volunteers will share the biggest room.

Besides these three buildings, we have a simple hut on the yard of Alitalo with two rooms and with no heating. Some shorter term volunteer workers have liked it staying there. And we have a yurt on the yard as well, for visitors.

Also we have a communal traditional sauna building (so-called smoke sauna) by the sea, which our volunteers can use any time. It takes around six hours to heat it.

Food

Our volunteers prepare their own food from the ingredients they buy from supermarkets in towns. We give them food allowance, which they use for whatever foods they like. Also they get organic vegetables during harvest season from our cooperative garden.

Transportation

We try to provide ESC volunteers with a communal car that would serve their needs. Otherwise there is a ride-sharing system in use that works in the internet. It is used by many people. Typically every day at least someone of us drives between the ecovillage and the city.

There are daily bus connections to the city from 500 m away, except Saturdays.

The volunteers will have their own used bicycles, which they use to get to different parts of our ecovillage, and to nearby places.

We pay the volunteers' local travelling expenses in moderation, including the local bus and use of the car. Travel expenses of long vacation trips are paid by the volunteers themselves.

Surrounding areas

The volunteers will be living and working mostly with the people of the ecovillage, on its land and in its buildings. Our own land is 66 hectares. The immediate area surrounding the ecovillage is peaceful countryside on the island of Livonsaari, on which some 300 permanent residents live, plus many other people have summer cottages on the island.

There is a small grocery shop with a post office 500 m away.

Seven km south there is a village, in which there is a small library, municipal healthcare, a gym, restaurants, a sand beach, and ferries to nearby islands.

Two km north there is a lake, which is a nice swimming place.

The nearest town is Naantali 22 km east, and the nearest city is Turku, 35 km east. Turku is the 6th biggest city in Finland, with population 182,950. Our ecovillage is connected with Turku in many ways. The cultural life in Turku has much attracted

our volunteers, and we support our volunteers' connections with the city.

Social life

The volunteers will be interacting mostly with the other residents of the ecovillage. We arrange communal happenings big and small. The most typical small social events are frequent sauna evenings, informal dinner parties, movie nights, board games, fishing, happenings in nearby villages, trips to nearby nature, and trips to the city and other communities. The volunteers are encouraged to arrange social events on their own, too.

Many times our volunteers have visited other places that host EVS projects and their volunteers have visited us. Four years ago we did an exchange programme with another ecovillage. Their volunteers came to work here for a week and then our volunteers went there to work for one week.

Participation in the community decision making and information flow

The volunteers will be eligible to attend all meetings of the ecovillage, and in the meetings they can have influence in all our decisions. They will also be enrolled to our e-mail groups, in which they can address any concern and propose any ideas.

Mentoring

There will be a principal mentor plus assistant mentors. The principal mentor will be available throughout the seven month period. In case the principal mentor cannot be reached or does not know the answer, the ESC project staff or the company chairman will be available for all urgent matters.

Mentoring is supported by all our social activity. The volunteers will be encouraged to address any concerns to anyone who is in contact with them.

Mentors are prepared to show the volunteers interesting places, activities, happenings, and peculiarities of Finnish life, and help the volunteers spend their free time together with locals.

During the first days the mentor will explain and teach the volunteers everything they need or want to know about the ecovillage, about local services and resources, about the resources of Turku, how all the practical matters related to the ESC project are conducted, and what it is to live in Finland.

The Finnish national agency called Opetushallitus arranges an on-arrival training camp in Kokkola in May. The volunteers will meet there with other volunteers who are in Finland. Another midterm training camp will be held in Sipoo in October.

Finnish language support

We offer an elementary Finnish language course of 20 hours in the ecovillage. However, Finnish is a difficult language, and we will not expect our volunteers to communicate in Finnish. We communicate with our volunteers in English, but of course some common words of Finnish are good to know. If someone is more interested in learning Finnish, we will support that intention.

Arrangements of working hours, meetings, and vacations

The working hours are 34 per week, which in a normal week would mean six to seven hours per day. However, a reasonable amount of flexibility of this schedule must be tolerated from both parties. Rural life often depends on unforeseen factors such as weather, availability of tools etc.

Work coordination meetings, mentoring meetings, the language course, and the trainings organized by the Finnish national agency will be included in the working hours.

The volunteers will normally have Saturdays and Sundays free, except for possible work and mentoring meetings.

There will be two national holidays, which are days off work: The first of May and midsummer.

In addition to the above mentioned days off, the volunteers will have a total of 14 days of vacation, which they can use according to their own wishes, in times when there is not very important work to be done. The vacations must be arranged in the work coordination meetings and in agreement with the work supervisors and the work coordinator.

Work supervision and safety in work

At the beginning of work every task will be supervised by one person. In the work meetings we will appoint a supervisor for each work assignment. The volunteers work in each assignment according to the particular supervisor's guidance. Supervisors will also take appropriate responsibility of volunteers' safety.

The volunteers are required to use all the safety equipment and safety features that their supervisor instructs them to use.

In case a volunteer feels that any particular task involves a risk to safety, they can refuse from working in that task until safety has been secured in a satisfactory way.

Types of work

1) One is agricultural work: working under supervision of a gardener in a non-profit co-operative garden (CSA, community supported agriculture) that produces a wide variety of organic vegetables that mostly go to customers in the city and surrounding areas. There may be some other farming-related work too, in addition to the co-operative garden.

2) The second major area includes helping with common tasks like making firewood, maintaining communal indoor spaces and outside areas, participating in creating various kinds of events, hosting visitors, and anything else that is typical in rural and community life.

3) The third major area is buildings: constructing new buildings and maintenance and renovation of existing buildings.

What will the volunteers attain here

Through the project the volunteers will have a chance to:

- 1) experience alternative lifestyle in practice
- 2) contribute to the development of an ecovillage and its activities
- 3) get valuable in-depth understanding of how a well-functioning intentional community works and how it relates to wider contexts
- 4) get short-term and long-term friends and connections that can be exceptionally rewarding
- 5) learn profound understanding on many topics and learn a wide range of skills

The volunteers will learn a versatile range of tasks involved in both typical rural life and living in a collective. Especially farming and construction related skills. A valuable skill will be quite rare know-how about how a collective works in terms of how we make common decisions and how we work to achieve common goals together, etc. We have very well functioning systems here and are happy to spread the knowledge.

Other valuable skill that our volunteers can learn from how we live our lives, is active citizenship: creating the world around us according to our own values and higher ideals by being active and creative. The volunteers will also see how people can sustain themselves in a rural area even with unconventional ideals and lifestyle.

Volunteers will get some knowledge of creative and advanced ways of building with natural materials, and using natural materials and resources of nature for various different purposes. They will learn how to reduce their ecological footprint. They will also have many chances to learn to apply their own creativity to different situations. They will learn do-it-yourself skills, as well as do-it-with-others skills. They will meet and get to know many people who come from different paths of life and parts of the world, including many interesting personalities.

What qualities we expect from our volunteers

The attitude is important: attitude towards living in an intentional community in the countryside, and towards sustainable, simple and natural lifestyle, and towards common rural work like farming and maintenance of buildings. Also the personal projects of volunteers related to our values are welcome and supported.

We will prefer those who show interest in this kind of lifestyle and to our values, who seem to have interest and physical capacity to manage with the types of work we offer, and who seem enthusiastic and willing to learn. We will also appreciate if our volunteers follow a healthy lifestyle and are relatively independent, sociable and creative.

We are not able to host physically handicapped persons. Our environment is such, and our work tasks require full physical capabilities.

According to our funding-related agreements, we give preference to people who face one or more of the following difficulties: cultural differences (for example belonging to a minority group), economic obstacles, geographical obstacles, or social obstacles.

Contact

Livonsaaren yhteisökylä EVS project

Name of the organisation: Livonsaaren yhteisökylä oy
ESC accreditation reference as coordinating and receiving organisation:
2017-1-FI01-KA110-046606
National id: 1959973-8
PIC: 933826567

E-mail: livonsaari.evs@gmail.com
Visual information: <https://www.facebook.com/livonsaari.evs/>
Address: Pohjanpääntie 49, 21180 Livonsaari, Finland
Skype: livonsaarievs

Personnel in charge of the project

Elvira Dudkova, project coordinator and mentor
Heidi Tolvanen, work coordinator
Sinikka Fleming, assistant mentor

Applying

Let us present the prerequisites and schedule to applying to this year's project, as an example only, so that one can be prepared to apply next year. The process and the dates might be similar in next year's project if we have one, but it's not guaranteed. The countries and sending organizations will be different in each year.

- 1) You can apply, if you are 18-30 years old.
- 2) You are willing and able to spend the whole period from the first of April to the end of October 2019 with us in Livonsaaren yhteisökylä.
- 3) Read this detailed description carefully through and ask yourself whether this is the kind of volunteering project you want to participate in.
- 4) Send your application to us to livonsaari.evs@gmail.com. The deadline for applications is **Sunday February 17th**.

During January and February we will select the participants. During the last week of February, at the latest, we will get back to the applicants who meet the most important criteria. We will interview the most suitable applicants through Skype.