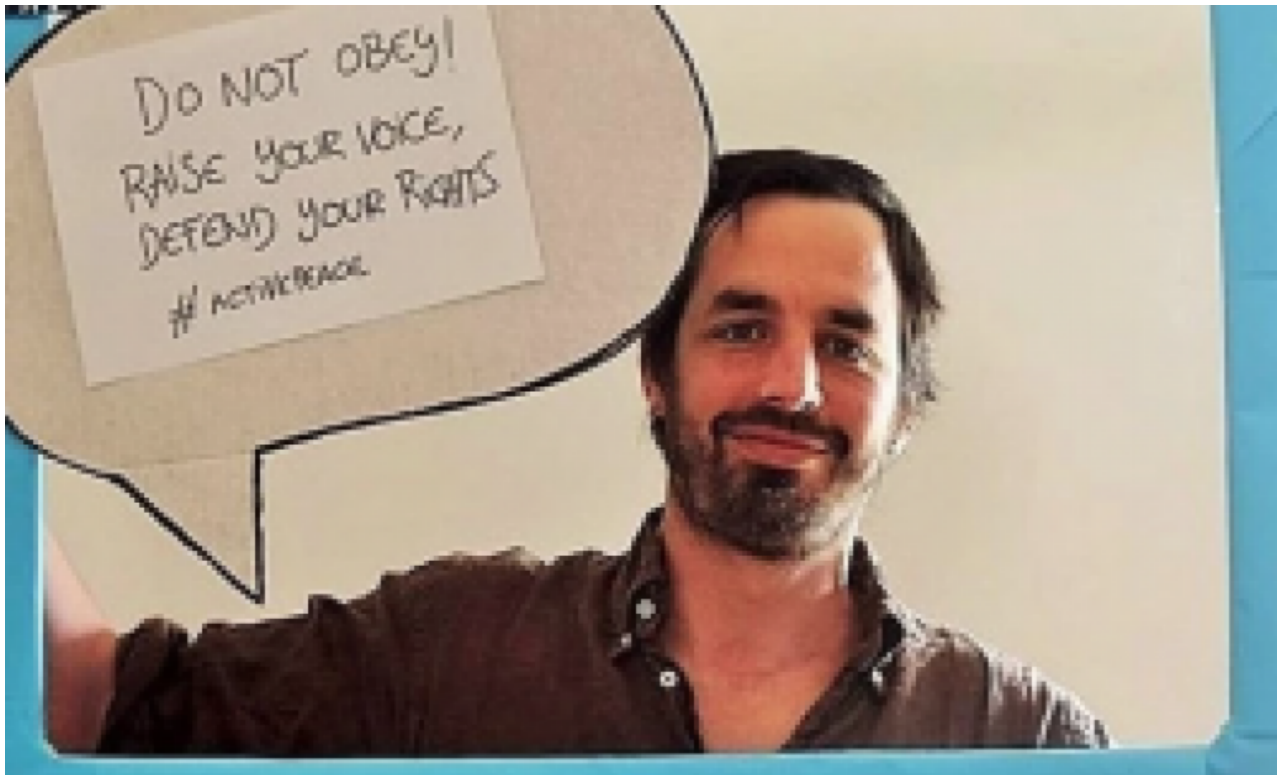


International volunteers build peace and bring local empowerment



12/05/2017 - 10:52



International Volunteer Day is held on December the 5th. It's a day where our workforce becomes visible.

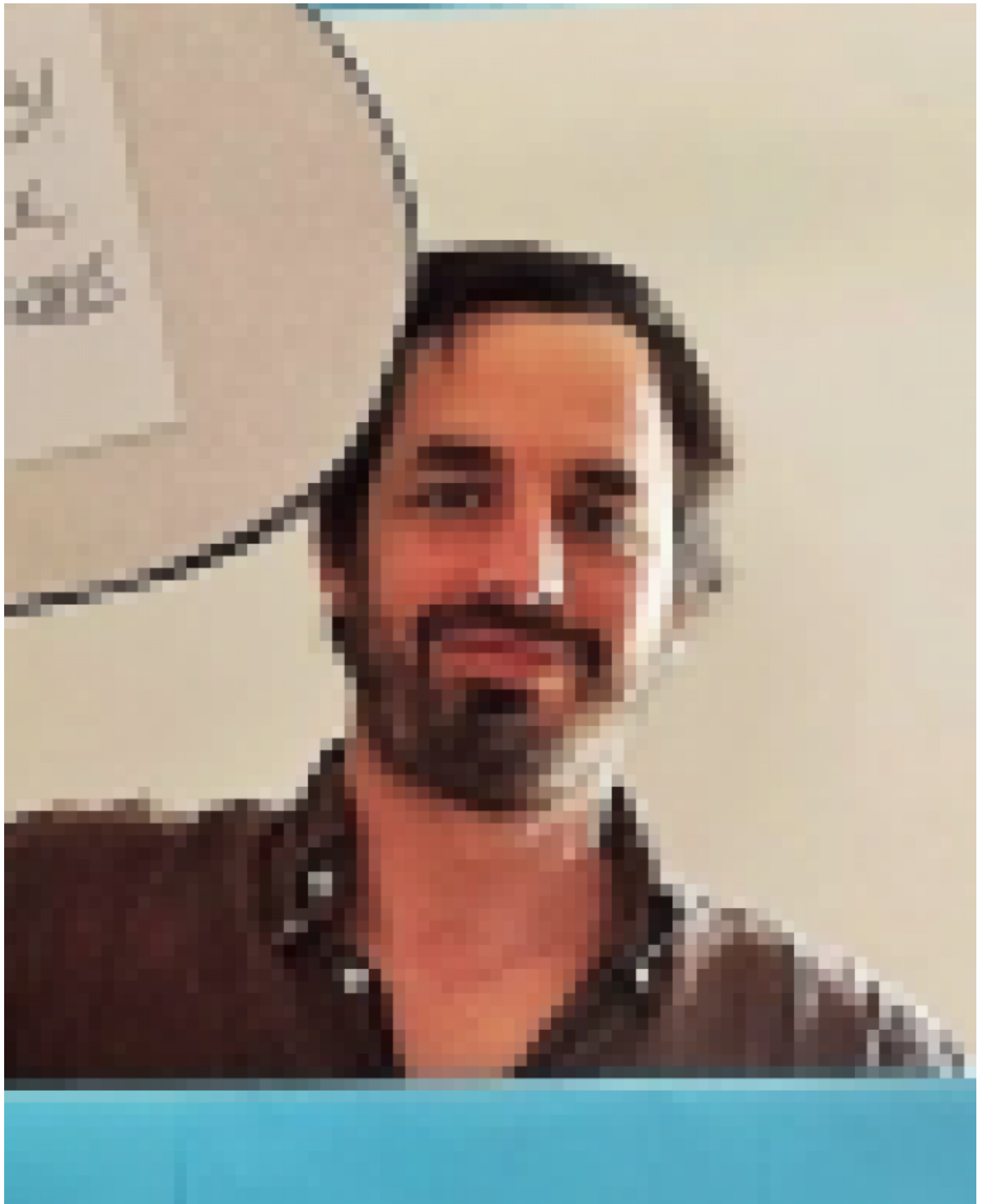
Oriol Josa

Submitted by iwith.org on Tue, 12/05/2017 - 10:46

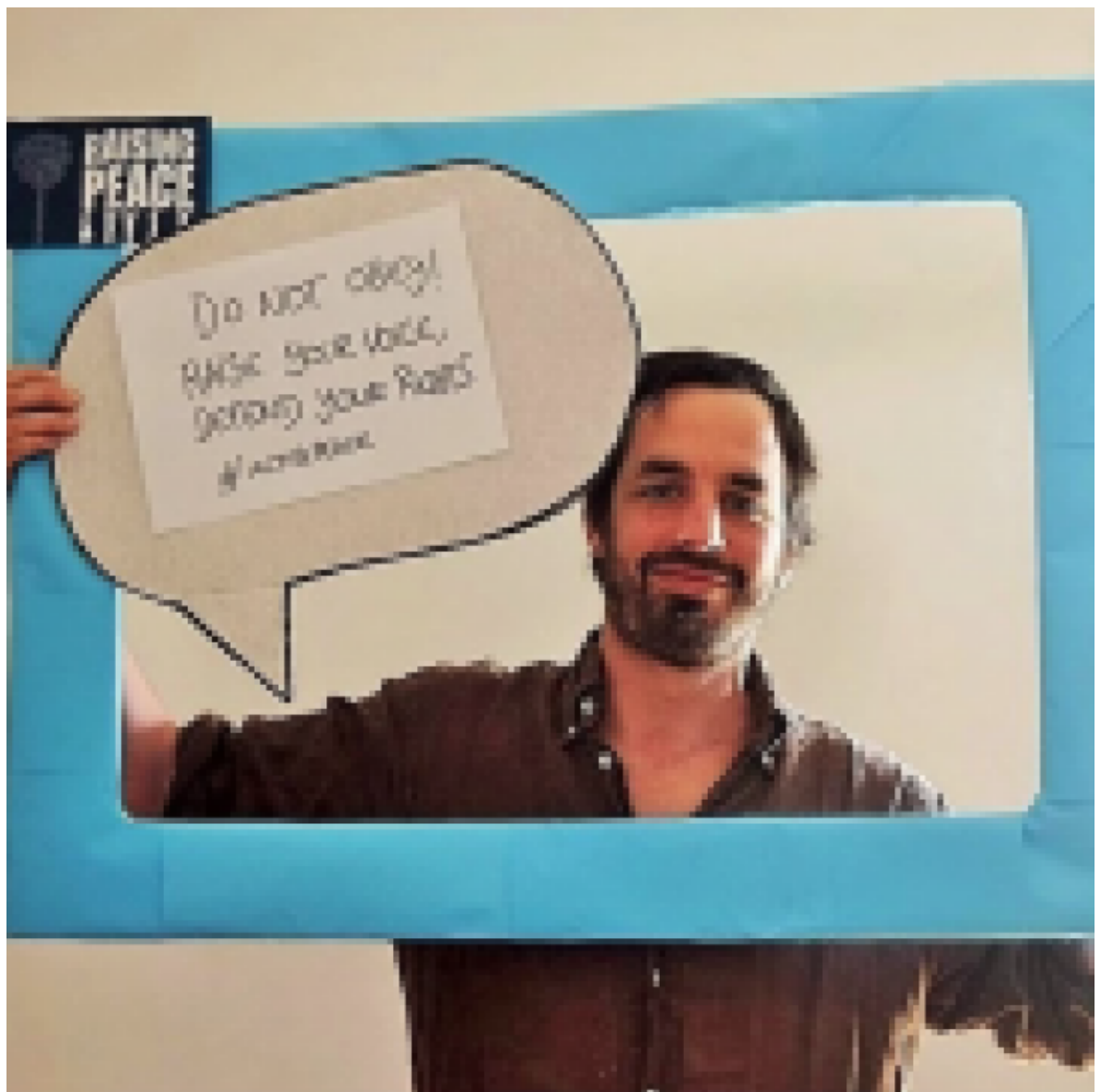
Description:

He collaborates with the Coordination Committee for International Voluntary Service (CCIVS). Oriol is a member of the international team on the research about volunteering impact.

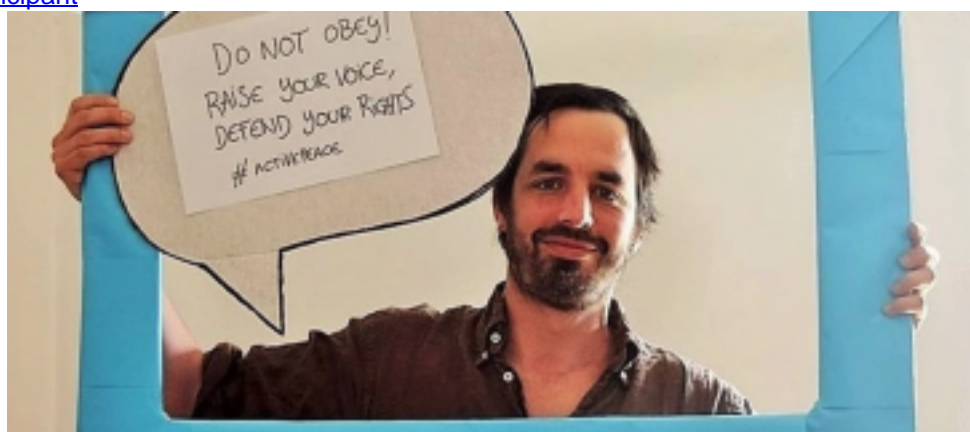
Vertical photo:



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Horizontal photo:

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5th of December, as the international volunteers day, is a date to celebrate, but for us in the [International Voluntary Service](#) (IVS) movement, it is a day also to relate with other actors in volunteering whom, with other scopes, methodologies, work as well in social transformation, whilst some in assistance to local needs.

After almost 100 years since the first international workcamp (the identity sign of IVS) organised in the German-French border after WWI, to create bonds that would avoid new wars between neighbours, IVS and other forms of volunteering have evolved a lot, and this led us to revise again who we are, what we do and what is the impact of our action.

The IVS movement gathers around **200 organisations** in more than **90 countries worldwide**. These organisations host around 30.000 volunteers in their nearly 4000 projects. These organisations train and send volunteers from their countries, to collaborate with projects coordinated by local partners who work in their communities on community development. The specificity of **workcamps** is that, besides a great learning experience for a person, it is a deep experience of personal and collective transformation, as well as a community development process. When people gather to live together with 15 people of 10 different nationalities during 3 weeks, working together but also living together, cooking, cleaning, exchanging with local cultures, we are generating a laboratory of emotions, learnings and conflicts in a confidence and safe environment, which leads to confront stereotypes (by recognising them in each of us), to learn how to manage conflicts in non-violent ways, and creates bonds of understanding across cultures which are a muscle against **exclusion, racism and war**. But of course, the work with a local organisation generates a local change by supporting existing projects by local associations, and which support as well the creation of harmonic intercultural relations at the local level.

Besides knowing what we do, we at the different international IVS networks, especially at [CCIVS](#), have started a long-term research to discover what is really our impact, to understand to which extent our method brings the change we want. For this, over 50 organisations have partnered, and cooperated with several universities; mainly the [University of Illinois](#). From a survey targeting 2000 volunteers and around 500 valid responses, now we can validate that volunteering improves capacities of volunteers in terms of: **autonomy, communication, conflict resolution, cultural openness, social integration and active participation**. Such a jump ahead! On the other hand, in a research held by interviewing 65 local community members in 12 different countries and 23 hosting projects, we have found evidence of positive impact in terms of Cultural/Intercultural Competences (98% of interviewees), Active Participation in their communities (79%), and Conflict Management (40%). Of course, in terms of impact of the specific work done by volunteers, 91% of interviewees expressed positive changes in the long term. Be curious and [find more in this map](#).

So these are reasons to feel reassured (congratulations to all volunteers and organisations who make this possible!) but at the same time to learn and improve through the many hints that this research has brought.

Maybe [Pierre Ceresole](#), the organiser of that first camp in 1920, and founder of SCI (a network which tomorrow starts their general assembly here in Catalonia), would find out that IVS has changed so much, but as well that it does contribute to that day-by-day creation of peace with intercultural bonds and resilient and participative communities. The most important is still to be done, and that's why we keep the spirits high.

Take your shovel and your gloves, your art, your care, your ability to learn and let's get back to changing the world, together and step by step!

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