

Swiss Youth at the UN Trends and Impact



Former UN Youth Volunteers
look back on their experience

Introduction to the UNYV Programme

Each year, the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) finances up to 20 United Nations Youth Volunteer (UNYV) positions. These UNYV assignments last one year and are a unique opportunity to learn, discover the multilateral system and kick-start a career in the area of International Cooperation (IC). They enable young professionals to gain valuable field experience with a UN organisation while contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Swiss funded programme is reserved for Swiss nationals only, therefore the number of applicants is relatively limited.

Why apply to a Swiss UN Youth Volunteer position?

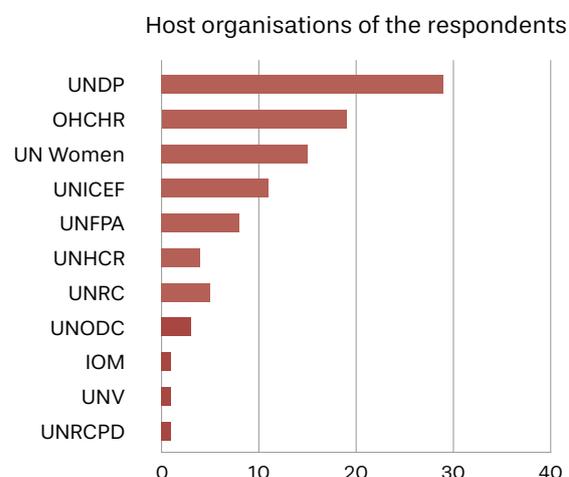
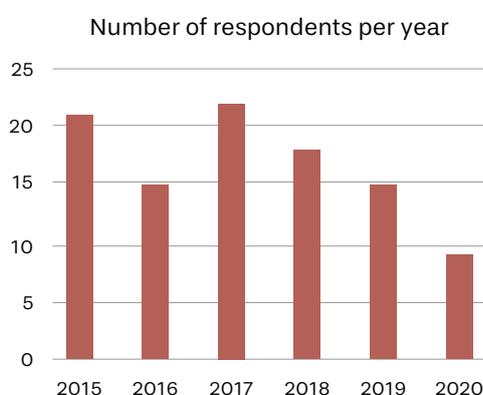
- To work with UN organisations in developing countries
- To get on-the-job training
- To increase knowledge and competencies, while living in a dynamic and multifaceted environment
- To join the work force of young Swiss professionals in the area of IC

Methodology

The data for this study has been collected through surveys sent each year to the UNYVs a few months after the end of their assignment. The following document aims at providing an overview of the career paths followed by former UNYVs as well as highlighting the key learning opportunities of UNYV assignments.



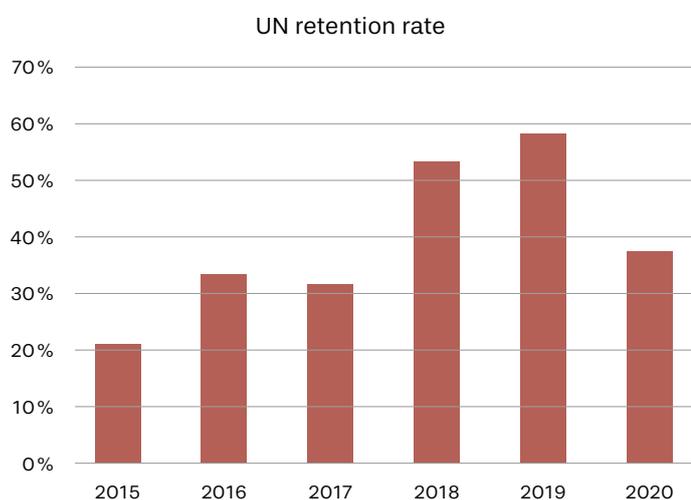
100 respondents
(~ 15/intake)



Note: The data from some UNYVs was collected during the year following their assignment. It should be noted that the number of respondents for the year 2020 was relatively low compared to other years.

Where do UNYVs work after their assignment?

The survey results show that since 2015, the United Nations retention rate after a UNYV assignment has been following an upward trend, now enabling almost half of former UNYVs to find an assignment within the UN at a subsequent time in the future.

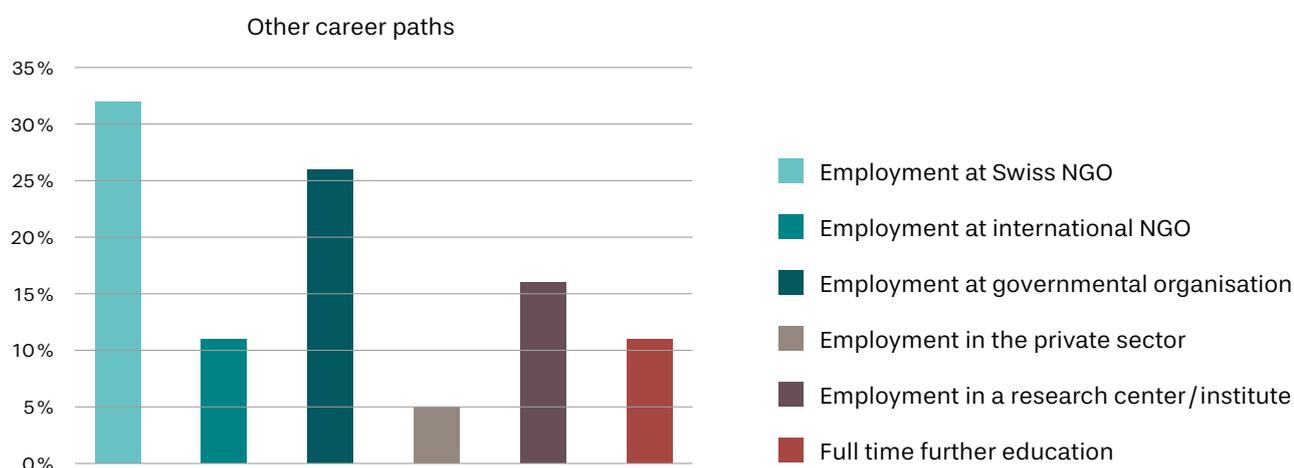


Note: the year 2020 numbers were considerably influenced by the COVID-19 situation. Moreover, retention rates show over time. Frequently, additional assignments with the UN are not consecutive to the UNYV contract.



"I would recommend the programme, as it is an exciting professional opportunity to open doors for further involvement in the UN system or the wider development arena."

A significant number of former UNYVs find a position within the United Nations System in the months that follow their assignment. From the UNYVs that decide to pursue their career with other types of employers, some find a position with governmental organisations, NGOs, research institutes or within the private sector.



Even though most UNYVs find a new position within some months after their assignment, the difficulty to find a job was raised by some respondents, together with the lack of provisions regarding unemployment benefits. Such job and social safeguard insecurities can represent a barrier to the willingness to continue a career in the field of international cooperation.



"I felt a lack of protection and provision regarding the unemployment pension."

Working in international cooperation

Results show that the majority of Swiss nationals who enrol in a UNYV mission keep working in the field of IC after their assignment.

"More than 90% of the UNYVs interviewed want to stay in IC after their mission."



People selected in the programme are mostly ready to enter the sector unless some challenges such as the lack of work-life balance, difficult economic conditions, or family plans impede their career. This corresponds to the study on Young Professionals conducted by cinfo in 2020, see ["The interest of young professionals for a career in International Cooperation"](#).

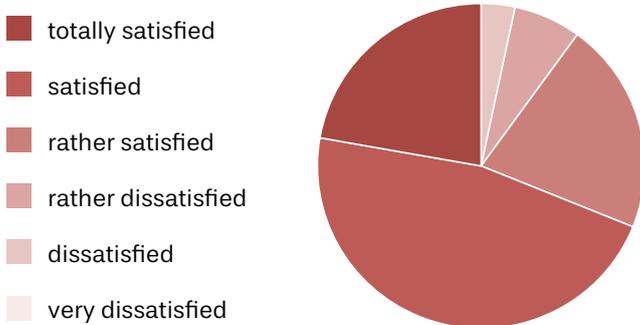
Aspects considered a personal disincentive to work in IC



Satisfaction and learning opportunities

Overall satisfaction

A large majority of the survey respondents were highly satisfied with their mission, not only with the professional aspect but also in terms of personal growth and learning opportunities.

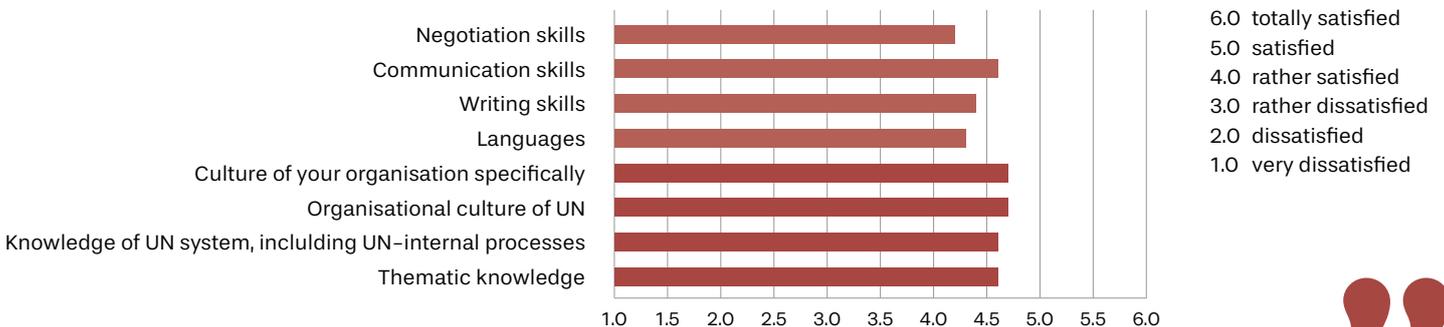


“It has been a great opportunity in terms of skills development, personal and professional growth.”



Learning opportunities

Learning opportunities during a UNYV assignment are numerous, including the understanding of the UN system and its culture, as well as the development of precious skills such as intercultural communication, negotiation or writing skills.



“UNYVs assignments are a very good opportunity to understand and contribute to the UN system / mandate as well as acquiring knowledge on a specific topic.”

“Not only does it allow to gain United Nations field experience, it also is an opportunity to dive deeply into another culture, and step out of your comfort zone to discover new sides of yourself.”

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