

Alliance's Accessing policy

1. Introduction



International Workcamps, apart from being an intercultural and citizenship action, are as well a valuable learning experience in the frame of non-formal education. In order to ensure accessibility to everyone, workcamps must be open for all, regardless of origin, gender, cultural and social background, economic position, education, religion and beliefs, physical and health conditions, and/or disabilities.

The Alliance's Accessing principle is to open international workcamps and other intercultural learning activities, for people with fewer opportunities to spread peace, tolerance and mutual understanding worldwide. People with fewer opportunities are people who face obstacles related to the indicators listed above. Therefore they might need support to participate in International Workcamps.

Since 1998 the Alliance has developed an accessing policy aiming to facilitate access to international voluntary service in Europe for all young people or adults with fewer opportunities. In 2004, Alliance decided to raise this accessing policy to international level. This paper is referring to the educational framework and the background of the Alliance's accessing policy. It is dedicated to all Alliance's members and partners.

So far many people have benefited from this action within International Voluntary Services (Workcamps/MTV/LTV/Trainings) or European educational programmes (such as several centralized EVS projects coordinated by Alliance).

With International Workcamps around the world, Alliance's member organisations offer over thousands of volunteering opportunities every year. All workcamps are open to anyone and often provide a first volunteering experience abroad.

Members and Partners from the Alliance network offer a chance to young people and adults with fewer opportunities, to join a first mobility action.

2. History and Principles

After a centralised EVS pilot project organised in 1998 by the European Commission together with the Alliance, SCI and YAP, Alliance decided that involving youngsters with fewer opportunities within voluntary projects would be an important step to bring positive experiences and a good impact for all Volunteers. Since then, Alliance succeeded several inclusion projects with the European Commission, in which numerous young volunteers with fewer opportunities participated.

Through this long experience of accessing Workcamps Alliance has developed a cooperative network of more than 80 organisations worldwide with a vast experience in placing volunteers with fewer opportunities. During three General Assemblies (2002 & 2004 and 2009), Alliance decided to have a permanent inclusion policy.

3. Objectives

Accessing workcamps can be considered as a part of lifelong learning or as vocational training process. Alliance's members aim to support volunteers with fewer opportunities to access voluntary service by different means:

- To open places in every workcamp for people with fewer opportunities
- To encourage the organisations to send and host volunteers with fewer opportunities

- To promote the tools and resources of the working group in order to support inclusive practices in the organisations
- Make inclusion one of Alliance's main values and implement activities and actions to ensure this
- Make diversity a regular consideration when organising workcamps
- Promoting different international voluntary service experiences (short, medium and long term)
- Developing specific European or international projects when appropriate (e.g. ST EVS projects)
- Special trainings for campleaders and staff members
- To plan collective events: post camp events, camp leader trainings, advanced planning visits and common actions with the other Alliance WGs.
- To request funds to local stakeholders, European Commission or Council of Europe whenever it is possible in order to support exchanges or events
- To have a clear description for specific mobility needs in the workcamps
- Give visibility to inclusive practices to inspire other organisations and volunteers.

4. Implementation

This policy is implemented by the Access for All Working Group (A4AWG) monitored by the Executive Committee.

In order to implement the Alliance Accessing Policy, the working group is developing and sharing tools that are facilitating the work with volunteers with fewer opportunities. Other measures like the sharing of funding opportunities, trainings on issues relevant in the work with volunteers with fewer opportunities are also carried out by the working group.

The most prominent part of the implementation of this policy in the Alliance is to encourage organisations and raise awareness about this topic through different tools and media such as infographics or the volunteer story database (<http://workcamp4all.wordpress.com/>).

With all these measures, we aim to increase the number of volunteers with fewer opportunities placed annually in our projects.

5. Best Practice

5.1 Support of volunteers

The main pedagogical aim of Workcamps is to provide participants with fewer opportunities with skills and to facilitate their active involvement, as citizen, in community life. Above all the volunteer should be able to participate fully in the life of the camp. This requires special consideration given to the following:

- Volunteers should be adequately prepared
- Receive pedagogical and/or financial support to be able to be a full active part of the workcamp
- The Working tasks should be adapted and suitable for the Volunteer's specific skills and abilities
- The accommodation should be suitable for the Volunteer's specific mobility needs
- Adequate communication about the needs of the Volunteer
- Acknowledge his/her progress and success

5.2. Support of organisations

All organisations have access to tools developed by the Access 4 All Working group in regards to the preparation, support and evaluation of the volunteer's experience. This is provided through common tools and in close cooperation between sending and hosting organisations.

Specific tools can be found on Alliance's website.