

## **ALLIANCE REPRESENTATION GUIDE**

### **Introduction**

**The Alliance of European Voluntary Service Organisations** is an International Non-Governmental Youth Organisation. It represents national voluntary service organisations which promote intercultural education, understanding and peace through voluntary service. The Alliance, founded in 1982, is presently made up of 49 members from 28 countries in Europe, Asia and America. Each member organisation runs an annual programme of International Volunteer Projects in their own country and exchanges volunteers with each other to create an international group of volunteers on each project.

**The Alliance Representation Guide (ARG)** is aimed at being used for external representation of the Alliance and its mission. The paper gives an overview of Alliance's values, activities and working fields. It consists of 6 chapters: volunteering (IVS), participation, mobility, social inclusion, sustainability and non-formal education.

- **International voluntary service (IVS)** is the main feature of Alliance as far as it is a European network of voluntary service organizations.
- **Active Participation** is an important concept within the Alliance as the network is run by voluntary committees and working groups and it is considered as a way to make individuals become actively involved in its activities and projects.
- **Mobility** within the Alliance not only ensures the possibility for everybody to travel, but also to change points of view by meeting different cultures, learning and understanding them.
- **Social inclusion** of all sections and members of society is promoted by the Alliance's members and partners through campaigns such as Access 4 All. These actions encourage social cohesion and social diversity in the projects of each organisation.
- **Sustainability** is as an integral part of Alliance activities, especially workcamps, as they help building a conscious relationship between communities and the surrounding environment and nature.
- **Non-formal education** is a way to enable personal growth and social development of participants and an integral part of what the Alliance does. It is a part of all our activities, on which its methods (participative and evaluative practices) are always applied.

The ARP is based on official Alliance documents (a Constitution, Standing Orders, and Policy Papers). As an Alliance position paper, the ARG, has been developed by the External Relations Committee with consultation and assistance of the concerned Working Groups, like the Access4All WG, Training Needs WG, Environmental Sustainability WG as well as the Alliance Development Committee and Executive Committee.

Each chapter includes which meaning the particular topic has for the Alliance, our history and experience, tools and methods of work as well as perspectives and future plans in this field.

### **Chapter 1. International Voluntary Service**

The Alliance is a **European network of voluntary service organizations**. Volunteering is the key characteristic of its activities and projects, as well as the way the network is run.

The whole concept of the Alliance, including management, is based on **voluntary work**, which is considered as a tool to improve active citizenship and democratic, political participation.

*The term voluntary work refers to all forms of voluntary activity, whether formal or informal, full-time or part-time, at home or abroad. It is undertaken of a person's own free-will, choice and motivation, and is without concern for financial gain. It benefits the individual volunteer, communities and society as a whole. It is also a vehicle for individuals and associations to address human, social or environmental*

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*needs and concerns. Formal voluntary activities add value, but do not replace professional, paid employees.*

(Definition of volunteering (Association of Voluntary Service Organisations))

The Alliance promotes **international voluntary service (IVS)**, involving volunteers from different countries which aims to promote intercultural education, understanding, peace, active citizenship and democratic participation in society.

Since 1982, the founding year of the network, it is a platform for exchanging **up to 20000** volunteers within **more than 1300** voluntary projects each year.

The most common form of voluntary service within the Alliance is **the short term voluntary project or workcamp**, which brings together people from different backgrounds and countries to work on projects that benefit local communities. Workcamps are a way for an international group to work and live together, to interact with the local community and experience cross-cultural understanding.

Other forms of IVS include **Mid and Long Term Volunteering**. These projects provide volunteers with the unique chance to express their personal commitment and solidarity for projects lasting from 1 to 12 months ( also benefiting local communities).

The Alliance also organizes a number of specialized events on the topic of volunteering, such as the following:

- Long Term Training Course (LTTC) 2015: "Workcamp studies – Quality education for trainers of youth leaders in the field of International Voluntary Service" – March / September 2015 – France / Italy / Austria
- The workplan "Looking into a Youth future with hope and trust" – June / November 2014 that included several events:
  - Capacity-building training course "Begin Anywhere: Volunteer, Inspire, Engage!"
  - Study Visit: mapping social activism of a European Youth capital in 2014
  - Congress "Values and role of IVS in the current political, social, economic situation"
- Study Session 2012 "Strengthening intercultural learning impact of voluntary programs for the local communities" – EYC Strasbourg – 19-26 February 2012
- Training for Trainers 2011 "Volunteering MAP: Motivation Action Participation" – 16-21 October 2011 – Turkey
- Post Camp Event (PCE) 2011 "New volunteering in XXI century" – Saint Petersburg (Russia)
- Study Session 2011 "Exploring Key Concepts and Empowering Participation and Inclusion of Young People through International Voluntary Service" – EYC Budapest – 20-27 February 2011
- General Conference 2010 "New Trends in the Voluntary World" – Ankara (Turkey)
- PCE 2009 Towards a united strategy: from international volunteering to democratic participation" – 7-14 September – Akrotiri, Santorini island (Greece)

Furthermore, the Alliance **was represented on different occasions** focused on the development and promotion of the concept of volunteering such as at the European Youth Event, Strasbourg, 9-11 May 2014; YO!Fest, 6 May 2015, Brussels.

The Alliance provides individuals with a chance to exercise volunteering, whatever their nationality, gender, age, economic, social and physical conditions. The Alliance believes that volunteering is **an opportunity and a right for everyone**. High quality voluntary service projects are one of the key tools to promote and put into practice intercultural dialogue, active citizenship, sustainable development and peace. The Alliance is a cooperative network providing member organizations with facilities to gather, exchange programmes and practices, produce common tools, experiment with new projects following the standards laid down in the Alliance Quality Charter.

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### Chapter 2. Participation

Participation is a process through which members gain influence and share control over development initiatives and the decisions and resources that affect them. Participation improves the quality, effectiveness and sustainability of projects and strengthens membership. **Since the foundation of the Alliance of European Voluntary Service Organizations in 1982, the network developed from a technical platform of volunteer exchange towards a cooperative network.**

In the Alliance participation is a **fundamental principle**. Within the Alliance participation means:

- *Participation of volunteers* (volunteers are actors of the project) in workcamps, long term voluntary services and educational activities (Study Visits, Training for Trainers, General Conferences, Evaluation meetings).
- Active participation in the community life: voluntary work as a tool **to improve active citizenship** and democratic, political participation.
- Active membership within the network: Members voluntarily take responsibilities for relevant tasks, working groups (every year) and can be elected to executive positions (every 2 years).
- Active cooperation with other networks on IVS related issues.
- The Alliance also encourages participation on a political and organizational level by building up or improving the skills of its members.

Through short, medium and long term voluntary service activities Alliance members participate in the **development and improvement of local communities** by strongly cooperating with them at every stage of the activity (from designing the project to the evaluation).

The way the Alliance considers participation is reflected in the management of the network. Based on democratic structure, Alliance works on its initiatives through an annual plan of action thanks to voluntary participation of staff and board members, active volunteers of the member organisations to 7 different committees and working groups:

- Executive Committee (EC)
- Alliance Development Committee (ADC)
- External Relations Committee (ERC)
- Access 4 All Working Group (A4AWG)
- Environmental Sustainability Working Group (ESWG)
- Training Needs Working Group (TNWG)
- Staff Development Working Group (SDWG)

This allows us to tackle different target groups and topics in the frame of IVS (social inclusion, sustainability, advocacy, staff development). This also permits to coordinate, monitor and facilitate initiatives coming from and managed by members. Since the Management Committee, consisting of EC and working group coordinators, was established as a new operational method in 2005, the importance of **active membership** was extended. Through that development the constitutional structure reacted on the immense growth of the network.

The current working groups are open to the participants (staff and board members of the organisations, active volunteers etc.), where they can deepen their knowledge and extent their individual work on the topic.

Furthermore Alliance considers that participation is also about taking part in **decision making bodies**, this is why the Alliance is represented at (and actively takes part in) the Advisory Council of Youth of the Council of Europe and the Youth Forum Jeunesse and Alliance representatives attend several European or international events throughout the year. The network also wishes to expand its political participation on the European level to advocate on youth work and **IVS**.

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### Chapter 3. Mobility

The concept of mobility perceived by the members of the network, not only ensures the possibility for everybody to travel, but also to change points of view by meeting different cultures, learning and understanding them through international voluntary service projects. We believe **mobility** of each kind causes **social change**.

Mobility within the Alliance is divided into two basic types. There is the mobility of volunteers on various voluntary projects (such as workcamps, mid-term and long-term voluntary projects) and the mobility provided by the large scale of learning opportunities such as seminars, training courses, meetings, events, debates which are organized by Alliance members and partners. Both types of mobility encourage and support **learning mobility of youth**, including young people with fewer opportunities.

Nowadays the Alliance is offering more opportunities to get involved and participate in volunteering regardless of age, social background or country. One of the main aims of the Alliance is to lobby for Volunteer Visas and also reduce other mobility obstacles like financial or language barriers .

Moreover, being part of the Alliance and its member organizations gives an opportunity to take part in different democratic structures (committees, WGs) where people can improve their abilities. This is yet another type of mobility within the network.

### Chapter 4. Social Inclusion

International Workcamps, apart from being an intercultural and citizenship action, are also a valuable learning experience. Workcamps can be a first step towards inclusion for volunteers with and without disabilities. A mixed group of volunteers with different background and variety of physical, mental, social or economic differences will achieve practical experience of integration in a non-formal way.

**The Alliance's Accessing principle is to offer a complete educational process that includes preparation, tools, projects, follow up.**

The principle finds a concrete and common implementation by seeking to ensure that workcamps accept as diverse a range of volunteers as possible and that volunteers should not be discriminated towards based on social or physical barriers.

Since 1998 the Alliance has developed an accessing policy aiming to facilitate access to international voluntary service for all young people or adults facing exclusion.

Through this long experience of Access 4 All campaign Alliance has developed:

- An education framework based on the volunteer's special needs, supported by the sending partner in close cooperation with the hosting organisation and the local community workers;
- Accessing tools in order to facilitate exchanges and support the pedagogical dimension of this experience (mentorship, preparation of leaders, etc.)
- Flexibility to use inclusion programmes on national, European (Erasmus+) or international level. Even without support, Alliance members have succeeded to develop Access 4 All (A4A) exchanges.
- Capacity to implement this project through a very flexible coordination scheme (A4A working group).

The Alliance developed a document that states clearly the aims and the principles of the *Alliance's accessing policy*. This policy is implemented by a permanent **Access for all Working Group** (A4AWG) monitored by the Executive Committee.

One of the most prominent ways to implement this policy in the Alliance is to launch an **annual accessing campaign**. The campaign is meant to raise awareness, encourage and support members to participate and give visibility towards our international partners. Participating in the campaign is optional for all organisations. The action is open to partner organisations, too. Since

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2005 the number of organisations involved was increasing every year (24 organisations with 220 workcamps in 2015).

A4A workcamps can be considered either as a life long learning or as vocational training process. Alliance members aim to support any volunteer to access voluntary service by different means, for example:

- Are the workcamp locations, the work itself, the accommodation and the camp leaders' skills fitting the needs of the volunteers?
- How do we increase the number of accessing exchanges?
- How can we improve the accessing process in order to bring the more excluded populations, to longer term international voluntary service?
- How can volunteers become ambassadors to promote accessible workcamps?
- How do we improve the communication of the results and impact of the successful exchanges?
- How to diversify the target groups?

In order to answer to these challenges, Alliance should focus on:

- Supporting the organisations to step in and to improve their accessing skills.
- Cooperating with other networks or programmes and organisations targeting specific groups.
- Helping Volunteers to increase their self-confidence, active citizenship, flexibility and social competences.
- Reinforcing Alliance's monitoring and capacities in order to develop new actions, initiatives, tools and approaches.
- Organising a collective validation system to give better impact to this experience and consequently better recognition.
- Deepen the knowledge on different target groups by selecting a yearly topic though the annual campaign.

## Chapter 5. Sustainability

The idea of sustainability had been present in the organizations and actions of Alliance long before the International Campaign for Sustainability in International Voluntary Service (IVS) was created and launched for the first time in 2010. For many years, members of the network have discussed about how to raise awareness for certain environmental issues. The Environmental Sustainability Working Group (ESWG) was created in 2012 and a framework of sustainability in IVS is provided by the Sustainability Policy Paper adopted by the GA 2014.

The first launch of the Campaign, with as many as 22 organizations and 3 networks joining the Campaign, showed how much environmental sustainability had already been acknowledged by 2010. Since then the idea has been developed further in particular but not exclusively by the ESGW. However, the WG is in charge of carrying out the Alliance Sustainability Campaign as well as supporting the associations in the enhancement of environmental sustainability in workcamps and in their activities.

The Sustainability Campaign aims at sensitizing and empowering our organisations and volunteers, reducing the carbon footprint of IVS projects and - in the long run - feeding a social change toward sustainability, to achieve changes in policies and new measures that improve the chances for sustainability in our countries and communities and giving a message to society that a change towards environmental sustainability is possible. It is based on four principles:

- Reducing consumption as well as pollution.
- Be aware of consumption patterns and be critical about them.
- Create and engage in actions to improve the environment.
- Create and engage in actions of education for sustainability.

These are principles are embedded in the methodological approach of ACTION, EDUCATION and NETWORKING. We want to show that different living habits are necessary and that the are



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possible by living them in our projects. We want to educate our volunteers, not only through (campleader) trainings, but through our actions. This is why since 2014 the Sustainability Campaign is represented by **one common action** implemented simultaneously in the workcamps and events of the Alliance and other networks. This action aims at increasing awareness among volunteers and communities about our potentialities to impact the environment, our local community or even the world. However, there is a clear focus on the campleaders as key multipliers.

The WG supports all organisations and volunteers that are joining the campaign with a set of tools. These are:

- A **handbook** with a variety of good ecological practices to be implemented during workcamps and all events.
- A **food infosheet** with information on the correlation between food and environment as well as several recipes.
- The **sustainable transport infosheet**: a collection of information suggesting a low-impact travel choice in several countries.
- **Evaluation forms** to monitor the effectiveness of the environmental sustainability we are promoting inside the workcamps.
- A **model training workshop** aimed at informing and involving the camp leaders about the Sustainability Campaign.

The campaign is launched every year by the ESWG, usually after the TM. Organisations and interested networks are invited to joined by:

1. Respecting and promoting the principles of the Campaign by involving camp leaders and volunteers.
2. Using and spreading the tools provided by the ESWG.
3. Participating in the international common action organized by the WG.

Alliance recognizes sustainability and networking as a key element of its strategic approach and plan of action. The Campaign was born in a wide context of cooperation with other networks - it is our aim to foster and enlarge this cooperation with other networks and organisations.

In 2015, Alliance has launched a common campaign with its sister networks CCIVS, SCI and NVDA: IVS against Climate Change. This includes the use of a common logo, a blog as well as a common declaration on the topic. One of the results of strong cooperation with other networks is a joint participation, i.e. deliver a workshop on our common actions against climate change, at the Conference of Youth just prior to the 21st UN Conference of Parties (COP) in Paris.

For the future, it will be necessary to work further on our visibility. Additionally, it is planned to scientifically assess the impact of our activities, i.e. workcamps, and find key indicators that will help us to identify mitigation measures to reduce the carbon footprint of our actions.

## Chapter 6. Non-Formal Education

In general, non-formal education refers to the learning which takes place outside formal educational curricula. Non-formal education activities involve people on a voluntary basis and are carefully planned, to foster the participants' personal and social development.

**The Alliance considers non-formal education (NFE) and intercultural learning as a way to enable personal growth and social development of all participants.**

NFE is an integral part of what Alliance does and this influences all of our activities, as methods from NFE are used toward their volunteers and staff in many places, such as participative and evaluative practices.

The Alliance considers workcamps as possible non-formal educational tools through learning by

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doing approach and learning from each other. Through all its activities, the Alliance aims to empower young people to accompany them in their intercultural process to develop among them relevant learning opportunities, to contribute to organisational and youth policy development.

Pursuant to its vision, mission and program Alliance implements educational activities such as international trainings, study sessions, seminars, conferences, etc. according to its educational policy.

Alliance educational activities are submitted and coordinated by the Executive Committee (EC) of Alliance and/or one of its member organizations. The role of Alliance in an educational activity labelled Alliance event is to provide expert services through the Alliance Pool of Trainers (A-PoT) in order to ensure its high quality standards.

Alliance educational activities are coherent to actual priorities of Alliance and they are based on the vision and mission of the network, its annual priorities set during the General Assembly (GA) as well as the current needs of Alliance members.

- Study Session (StS)
- Training of Trainers (ToT)
- Post-Season Event (PSE)
- Advanced Training Course (ATC)
- Training of Camp Leaders (TCL)
- General Conference (GC), every 2 years
- Long Term Training Course, every 2 years

(For more information about every single event please consult the Alliance Training and Educational Policy paper adopted by the GA 2013).

Besides regular events, considering the needs of members and current trends in voluntary world, Alliance organizes **various educational activities, trainings and seminars**. The most recent projects are the following:

- Staff Meetings 2012, 2013, 2015;
- Long Term Training Course (LTTC) 2015: "Workcamp studies – Quality education for trainers of youth leaders in the field of International Voluntary Service" – March / September 2015 – France / Italy / Austria
- Workplan "Looking into a Youth future with hope and trust" (2014) consisting of: "Capacity-building training course "Begin Anywhere: Volunteer, Inspire, Engage!", "Study Visit: mapping social activism of a European Youth capital in 2014", Congress "Values and role of IVS in the current political, social, economic situation";
- "Learning Bridges to Youth Empowerment, Creativity and Participation" project consisting of a Kick-off networking seminar (December 2012), a Multipliers' Training on Youth empowerment in voluntary projects combined with a field visit (February 2013), 8 Job Shadowings dedicated to networking actions between Europe and Latin America, an Evaluation meeting and final dissemination event (September 2013), local awareness campaigns/events in 18 different countries, an international logo contest;
- Training "Young people building peace and intercultural dialogue through advocacy and cooperation", 2013

Non-formal education is also present in the **management of the network** through Executive Committee, General Assembly and working groups functioning (active and voluntary involvement) and mandating members to represent the Alliance on various events.

In all non-formal educational activities, the Alliance uses large range of methods: active participation, exchanging of good practices in groups, workshops, discussions in plenary, presentation of studies involving stakeholders and intercultural learning of volunteers. Alliance has produced a unique tool "The Alliance Guidebook" as an educational tool for organizers and staff (how to...) that is used in our work together with many other tools for trainers and leaders dedicated to different topics (evaluation toolkit, training booklet).

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### Conclusion

The Alliance is a democratic, accessible, supportive and open cooperative network based on active voluntary participation of its members.

The Alliance provides individuals with a chance to volunteer regardless of nationality, gender, age, economic, social and physical conditions. Through active participation in voluntary projects volunteers get acquainted with various social, environmental and political issues, gain knowledge and develop skills to become active citizens (through informal learning and non-formal educational tools). The Alliance is continuously trying to improve its projects in terms of quality, quantity, environmental sustainability and accessibility.

Although the Alliance has developed several tools and methods on impact and quality of IVS projects, the network needs to create and implement a common evaluative framework to measure the impact of international voluntary service projects on local communities and volunteers.

The Alliance stresses the importance of volunteering on an international level and lobbies for IVS, environmental sustainability, social inclusion, peace and recognition of non formal education and mobility. In terms of advocacy and visibility the highest priority of the Alliance is to be better known as a dynamic and reliable network of NGOs and create a clear structure on external representation to promote values and good practices of the network among institutions, other NGOs and networks. A matter of great importance is the acquisition of new partners and spreading awareness of network's activities, as well as better cooperation with sister networks (CCIVS, SCI, NVDA, SEEYN, UN Volunteers).