



International  
Campaign  
for Sustainability  
in Voluntary Service

## Handbook of recommendations: How to make environmental sustainability part of your workcamps and events



# The Environmental Sustainability Working Group of the Alliance

Dear partners,

this document is part of a toolkit elaborated in 2013 by the **Environmental Sustainability Working Group (ESWG)** of the Alliance. The ESWG was created in 2012 with the aim of promoting the principles of the Sustainability Campaign carried out by the Alliance as well as to support the associations in the enhancement of environmental sustainability in workcamps and in their activities.

The ESWG consists of 11 member organizations: IBG Internationale Begegnung in Gemeinschaftsdiensten (Germany) - as coordinating organization, INEX Slovakia (Slovakia), Concordia (France), De Amicitia (Spain), Legambiente (Italy), Lunaria (Italy), SIW (Netherlands), Solidarités Jeunesses, (France), IJGD (Germany), Genctur (Turkey) and World4U (Russia).

The organisations of the ESWG share, with all the Alliance associations, the will to transform our communities. They strive for **a fairer world, one that is more sustainable, healthier and with more balanced resources and social justice** that will lead toward the development of people, communities, their happiness and solidarity. This is the main mission that all voluntary service organisations have.

The Environmental Sustainability Working Group (ESWG) would like to thank you for your effort to organize this Alliance project.

In order to help the ESWG to reach the objectives of the sustainability campaign, we ask you to adopt some recommendations that we suggest during the organization of your events! It would mean that we made a little extra effort in order to prevent irrational use of natural resources.

This handbook contains some suggestions on how to organise our voluntary projects in an environmentally sustainable way. We want to spread and enhance these good practices in order to help building a better world!

We kindly ask you to read these recommendations and try to apply them. Also, please note that this handbook is being updated annually.

# *Introduction*

Workcamps and voluntary projects have always been an occasion of cultural, social and linguistic exchange; a way to enhance cooperation and peace between different cultures and people. Furthermore, they may improve participation in social life as well as to suggest alternative models of economic, environmental and civil development. In addition, work camps or any other voluntary project of active civil participation may suggest values for an environmentally friendly attitude: the centrality of the relationship between people and environment; social equity, cooperation solidarity and environmental sustainability. As matter of fact, environmental sustainability can create economic value by reducing costs as well as social value by improving the quality of our life.

In this context, work camps may be conceived as a chance to raise awareness of sustainable good practices in all the actors involved in our projects: volunteers, local communities and administrative councils. They may also help improving a conscious relationship between people and communities as well as between communities and the surrounding environment. Moreover, we may be able to show how to obtain concrete results paying attention to little things in our everyday life in order to finally achieve a real change. This philosophy may be the starting point towards a fair and more sustainable world for the coming generations.

Work camps can play an important role to reach some of the over mentioned strategic objectives that should be part of the mission of all our organizations: raising awareness in local authorities and communities of sustainable ways of living; promoting and defending the cultural and environmental quality of our territories; enhancing biodiversity and natural landscapes; fighting environmental abuses while spreading values of legality as necessary condition to social and economic development. In this handbook you will find useful recommendations for camp leaders and work camp participants and also organizers of the camps such as voluntary organizations, project/local partners (marked in blue).

# Water

To implement workcamps within the objectives of environmental sustainability we need to take into account water consumption and management during the workcamp weeks. Here are some propositions that organisations shall take into account in order to manage and decrease water consumption during summer workcamps.

## Production of waste water

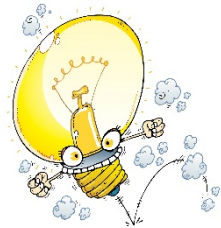
- Install a toilet flush with double buttons so it uses the right amount of water. 30% of the whole water supply is used for the toilet.
- Use the same water for different purposes: for instance, you can use the water you boiled to irrigate flowers and plants!
- Drink tap water. You can save on bottles' packaging, transport and plastic production. For instance, 350000 million tons of polyethylene, 665000 tons of oil and 910000 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are needed to bottle 12 billion litres of water! Moreover, tap water is cheaper and safer since analyses are regularly conducted every year.
  - Do the washing up by dipping the dishes into a washbasin and then rinsing them off with running water. If you let water run continuously while washing up you can waste more water than a dishwasher!
- Use the washing machine or the dishwasher only with full loads or choose the energy-saving programs. A family can economize between 8000 and 11000 litres per year this way.
- Do not waste water. Pay attention to water flow and turn the tap off when you brush your teeth or when you shave. An average of ten litres of water runs through a tap every minute! Also, you might consider making an agreement with the participants to take a shower one time for each per day, not more, and ask them to try to reduce the consume of water during the shower!
- Replace the gaskets on leaky taps and install pressure regulators. You can save up to 40% of water! A tap leaking 30 gutters per minute wastes 200 litres every month and 2400 litres every year!



- Take a shower rather than a bath. A shower uses 25-50 litres while a bath requires 150-200 litres. During workcamps, propose to each volunteer to take no more than a shower per day.
- Due to very frequent use, the toilet and faucet can get broken. Be prepared to fix them in time to prevent the unnecessary leaking of water.
- Organize a way keep drinking water cool. Too often people let water run a minute before they pour it in a glass, so that it would be colder. You can prevent this from happening.

## Electricity

- Switch the lights off when you don't need them
- Install automatic independent Switches.
- Paint the walls white or with light colours. You can save on light bulbs!
- Natural light is always preferable. Open windows and shutters in the daytime.
- Replace the traditional incandescent light bulbs with fluorescent lamps of class The latter bulbs are five times more energy-efficient, with a lifetime of between 6000 and 15000 hours versus 1000 hours for a traditional light bulb. Moreover, a fluorescent light bulb discharges 80% less CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere.
- Turn the stand-by dispositive off. For instance, a TV turned on uses 130Kwh per year while 105 Kwh are used for a TV in stand-by. You can save 80 kg of CO<sub>2</sub> per year!
- Buy electronic household appliances of class A or higher. Choose the ones with power-save interrupter.
- Replace the electric boiler with a gas water heater. Alternatively, activate the electronic heating during the night to save 2135Kg of CO<sub>2</sub>. Remember: heating is the most responsible for CO<sub>2</sub> emissions!



- [Install a condensing boiler.](#)
- Clean up regularly fridge and freezer. Regulate the temperature according to the different seasons. Open them only if necessary and close them as soon as you can. Place them in the coolest point of the kitchen. Do not keep them either next to the cooker or to the oven.
- Use the washing machine and the dishwasher fully loaded. Try to activate it during the night. Choose the proper energy-saving program and low temperature.
- Remember that the half-load program does not imply half-energy consumption. You can save 45 kg of CO<sub>2</sub> per year!

## Heating

- Regulate the heating of each room according to your need. Turn it off when you are out.
- Check regularly the safety and the efficiency of your heating system.
- Shut the windows and the shutters during the night in order to minimize loss of heat.
- Do not leave clothes on the radiators.
- [Install thermostatic radiator valves in order to properly regulate the temperature](#)
- Insulate doors and windows.
- [Install double glass windows, rubber gaskets or silicon in order to avoid heat loss.](#)
- [Install a ventilating and air-conditioning system with reversible air flow.](#)

## Eating

- Buy local seasonal products, unpacked or with reduced and recyclable packaging
- Limit the consumption of meat and turn to a diet based on vegetables, cereals and fruits. You can cut emissions linked to breeding and transport of animals. For instance, a kilo of meat absorbs the same amount of energy as lighting a 100W light bulb for three weeks!
- [Take part in a Community Supported Agriculture group that buys local products directly from the producer. A kg of cherries flying from Argentina for 12000 km](#)

implies 16,82 of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions versus 0.28 kg of CO<sub>2</sub> emitted by a kg of cherries locally produced and transported within a distance of 100Km

- Choose products produced by biological agriculture. According to recent research, a man consumes on average 644 kg of fresh products, which implies 1230 kg of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per year. Turning to bio agriculture you can cut CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 30%
- Buy fair trade products such as coffee, cocoa, tea and brown sugar. It helps Southern and poor producers to plan their production and to sell products at a fair price respecting the environment
- Use a pressure pot to cook products that need longer cooking
- Cover the pot with a lid. The water would boil faster in order to avoid electricity loss. Do not add salt when water is not boiling yet since it increases the boiling point.

## Cleaning up

- Limit the consumption of detergents and do not use them for a different purpose than the one suggested on the labels
- Choose environmentally friendly products (Eco-label)
- Open the windows after cleaning to air out the room and release dangerous vapours



## Waste management & recycling

Another important point is waste production and management by volunteers and camp leaders. The aim in terms of sustainability is to limit the production of waste as much as possible.

- Do not buy food in big packages. If you need to buy plastic cups and plates,
- Separate organic waste from other wastes in order to make composts. In practice, it means that before the event you should provide a special place or barrel where a large quantity of organic waste will be separated. This process of

making compost is long, it will not be finished before the end of the event, but you can find somebody in the local community to give it.

- Separate your recyclables for collection. For more information, contact the retailer or the local authorities in charge of waste management Recycling products are mainly plastics, aluminium cans, glasses and separate papers.
- Reduce the packaging: choose products with easily recyclable packaging. Buy draught drinks as well as unpacked fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Explain to the participants the trouble plastic bags bring. Ask them to reuse plastic bags and not to always take new ones from shops.
- Don't put waste in closed plastic bags - if the bag is closed, it will take more time to decompose because it doesn't have any contact with air.
- Papers: prefer e-mails whenever possible; choose recycled paper, FSC paper etc.

**Some data:**

1. You can save 178kg of CO<sub>2</sub> (around 84% less emissions) by producing a ton of paper using recycled material rather than virgin material;
2. You can reduce emissions by 50% by producing a ton of cans using recycled material;
3. Recycling 351000 ton of packaging allows you to save 343000 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions;
4. You can cut 56% of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by producing glass with recycled material.

In most of the countries where people are coming from recycling is a normal and everyday habit. Don't think that you will get a negative reaction when you explain where and how to sort out your waste. On the contrary! They will be happy to accept your advice and concern. Don't look at this as just additional work, but as enrichment of the Alliance event!

## Travelling

- Consult our "Sustainable Transport Infosheet" and send it to your volunteers.
- Use your car only if necessary. Choose public transports, bike or walk. It is good for your health!
- Promote new innovative services of environmentally friendly transportation: bike sharing, car sharing, taxi bus, reserved parking and lanes for car-pooling.



- If you give up using the car once a week for a journey of 10 km on average, you can save 70 euros of oil and 7.4 kg of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per km
- Do not speed up frequently and drive on an average speed of 90/110 km/h to economize up to 55 kg of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions
- For medium-distance journeys (30-200 km), choose to travel by bus or by train. Alternatively, you can choose to travel by car only if at least four people on board.
- For long-distance journeys (100-800 km) by groups of people, choose always to travel by train, by boat or by bus.
- For journeys of more than 800 km and only if it is the only solution, you can choose to fly.

#### **Some Data**

For instance, flying from London to Paris takes you 3.5 hours and it implies 244 kg of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Alternatively, covering the same distance by train takes you 2.5 hours and it implies 22 kg of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

Again, flying from London to Barcelona takes you 4.5 hours and it implies an emission of 277 kg of CO<sub>2</sub>. Alternatively, taking the train takes you 20 hours and it implies an emission of 40 kg of CO<sub>2</sub>.