

Alliance's Accessing policy

1. Introduction

International Workcamps apart from being an intercultural and citizenship action are as well a valuable learning experience. Workcamps can be a first step towards inclusion for volunteers with and without disabilities. The mixed group of volunteers with their variety of physical, mental, social or economic challenges will achieve a contribution for integration work through practical experiences in a non-formal way.

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.

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 facing exclusion. 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 (4 centralized EVS projects coordinated by Alliance).

With more than **1300** workcamps around the world, Alliance's member organisations offer over **15.000** 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 facing exclusion, 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 Volunteers with and without special needs. Since then, Alliance succeeded three more approved inclusion projects with the European Commission, in which 95 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 facing exclusion. 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 any disadvantaged volunteer to access voluntary service by different means:

- To open places in every workcamp for people with fewer opportunities
- To launch an annual "accessing campaign" in order to raise awareness and empower resp. improve the inclusion work of voluntary service organisations
- Use the campaign as a clear political statement from the Alliance for a better World
- 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 compleaders and staff members
- To plan collective events: volunteer post camps, leader study sessions, advanced planning visits etc.
- 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 of the accessibility of each workcamp

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 launch an annual accessing campaign. The campaign is meant to raise awareness, encourage and support members and partners to participate and give visibility in and outside of the Alliance network. Participating at the campaign is recommended for all organisations.

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 support to be able to be a full active part of the group
- 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.