



**THE OUTCOMES OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE
"Open Space for Migration"
of
the Alliance of European Voluntary Service Organisations**

We, the participants of **the General Conference** of the Alliance of European Voluntary Service Organisations "**Open Space for Migration**", held in Petnica (Serbia) from 30/10-2/11/2016 and hosted by the member organisations Young Researchers of Serbia and IJGD Germany,

representing 23 International Voluntary Service organisations from 17 countries,

having the common ownership of values such as, solidarity, peace, understanding, acceptance, respect, diversity, gender equality, dignity, trust and responsibility, with our presence in the Republic of Serbia as a part of the migrants' Balkan route,

state the importance of acknowledging the reality of forced migrants, our role as International Voluntary Service Organisations in this context and the importance of questions related to their human rights, legal status, gender and religion

reaffirm our commitment as peace organisations to our more than 1500 local partners worldwide, our sister networks, European institutions and stakeholders on national level

and respond critically, responsibly and readily to challenges ahead by

- 1. assessing our strengths and weaknesses**
- 2. voicing our concerns**
- 3. proposing and recommending courses of action to relevant stakeholders.**

We recognize that naming refugees, migrants, asylum seekers (etc.) reproduces stereotypes about people who are facing hardships. In this document we are naming all of them migrants.

Alliance as a network has a rich expertise in international exchange of volunteers, of participative methods, exchange of good practices, of building capacities of member organisations. Based on our expertise we are voicing our concerns regarding migration policies around the world. We are able to add our expertise, to our partners on global, European, national and especially local level in order to maximize the impact our projects may have in the area of forced migrations. Although we act independently from governments, in joint efforts, we are able to quickly provide floor to pilot projects, research, inclusion measures and tools that governmental structures cannot offer to migrants as a target group. We put forward workcamps as unique international voluntary service program, once again on the historical spotlight as a participative tool for inclusion, non-formal education and local development that contributes to raising awareness, building intercultural understanding and social democratic cohesion.

Danger of a single story:

We believe in the importance of IVS projects as platforms for telling many and diverse stories. Among them we would like to provide space for voicing real stories of refugees, in

order to fight prejudices based on a single and therefore one sided story of permanent crisis created by the mainstream media.

We need to question the legitimacy of the word "crisis" that is used in relation to migrants.

Migration as decoration:

As citizens and people who work in IVS, we have a responsibility to react to the needs of migrants, in a practical and efficient way and to provide meaningful help to people who need it the most.

- **Adequate assessment:**

Since specific needs change from day to day, it is important to develop ways to conduct proper assessment of the needs of migrants, and take this information into account in all the stages of IVS projects (planning, implementation, evaluation). In this way resources will not be wasted.

- **Meaningful participation:**

Our second concern is that sometimes migrants are not included enough in IVS projects, they can potentially be passive recipients of services, rather than participants with an active role in voicing their needs.

- **Abuse of the word migration:**

Another concern we have is that the word migration can be misused as decoration in the project writing phase itself in order to have easier access to different funds.

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Reaffirming the resolution from the Alliance Congress 2014: "... committed to developing our network based on the values and principles of volunteering and peace towards a more democratic, more responsible and humane society locally and globally. We commit to solidarity, cooperation and active participation by sharing experiences and knowledge and through building our common capacities, starting from our own management and activities"

In Petnica (Serbia), on the 2nd of November 2016

ANNEXES – list of past, ongoing and upcoming projects linked to the topic of the forced migrations and international voluntary services.