ALLIANCE REPRESENTATION GUIDE

Introduction

The Alliance of European Voluntary Service Organisations is an International Non-Governmental Youth Organisation. It represents national voluntary service organisations that promote intercultural education, understanding and peace through voluntary service. The Alliance, founded in 1982, is presently made up of 53 members from 31 countries in Europe, Asia and America. Each member organisation runs an annual programme of International Volunteering Projects in their own country and exchanges volunteers with each other to create an international group of volunteers on each project.

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.

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 7 chapters: volunteering (IVS), participation, mobility, social inclusion, sustainability, gender equality and non-formal education.

- **Chapter 1: International voluntary service (IVS)** is the main feature of Alliance as far as it is a European network of voluntary service organizations.

- **Chapter 2: 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.

- **Chapter 3: 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.

- **Chapter 4: Social inclusion** of all sections and members of society is promoted by the Alliance's members and partners with the support of the Access for All Working Group (A4AWG). These actions encourage social cohesion and social diversity in the projects of each organisation.

- **Chapter 5: Sustainability** is an integral part of Alliance activities, especially workcamps, as they help build a conscious relationship between communities and the surrounding environment and nature.

- **Chapter 6: Gender Equality** is essential in our network as a means of justice, fairness and equal opportunities for everyone. Alliance works towards an equal society with no gender discrimination or biases.

- **Chapter 7: Non-formal education** is a way to enable personal growth and social development of our volunteers. It is an integral part of all Alliance activities, in which approach

and methods used in non-formal education (participative and reflective practices) are always applied.

The ARG is based on official Alliance documents (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 (WG's), like the Access for All WG, Training Needs WG, Environmental Sustainability WG, the Gender Equality WG, as well as the Alliance Development Committee and Executive Committee.

Each chapter includes the meaning that 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 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, mutual understanding, peace, active citizenship and democratic participation in society.

Since 1982, the founding year of the network, it has developed into 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 (historically) **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 and benefit the local communities that host them.

The Alliance also organizes a number of specialized events on the topic of volunteering, for example:

- Long Term Training Course (LTTC) 2017: "Workcamp studies 2.0." – February / September 2017 – Greece / Italy / Spain

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 in Strasbourg in 2014, or the YO!Fest in Brussels in 2015.

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 a democratic structure, the Alliance works on its initiatives through an annual plan of action thanks to the voluntary participation of staff and board members and active volunteers of its member organisations inside 8 different committees and working groups:

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

This structure allows us to tackle different target groups and topics in the frame of IVS (social inclusion, sustainability, advocacy, staff development). It 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 to the immense growth of the network.

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

Furthermore, Alliance considers that participation is also about taking part in **decision making bodies**, which is why the Alliance is represented at (and actively takes part in) the Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe (if elected) as well as the Youth Forum Jeunesse (YFJ). 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.**

Chapter 3. Mobility

The concept of mobility perceived by the members of the network, not only enables the possibility for everybody to travel, but also to change points of view by meeting different cultures, and 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.

The Alliance also supports the Freedom of Movement Campaign, an advocacy campaign that aims at ensuring free movement of people, regardless of origin, age, gender or any other characteristic. The Alliance has adopted a position paper on Freedom of Movement. This paper has been drafted, discussed, amended and adopted by all IVS networks during 2016 and 2017. It was born from the vision of CCIVS's White Paper for International Voluntary Service 2011- 2021, that sets the vision of "a society which allows freedom of movement in which all members without distinction are empowered to exercise active citizenship". The position paper is accompanied by a support document that clarifies its origin, background and different contribution from the networks on specific topics contained in the paper.

Additionally, 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, regardless of origin, gender, cultural and social background, economic position, education, religion and beliefs, physical and health conditions, and/or disabilities. A mixed group of volunteers with different backgrounds and a variety of physical, mental, social or economic realities will achieve practical experience of integration in a non-formal way.

The Alliance's Accessing principle is to offer a series of support tools, such as preparation, and follow-up tools, projects and seminars, etc.; in order to support volunteers who may face obstacles to participate in a voluntary project and thus ensure the success of their participation and enhance the educational value of these projects.

The principle finds a concrete and common implementation by seeking to ensure that workcamps include a range of volunteers as diverse as possible and that volunteers should not be discriminated against based on social, cultural, physical barriers, or any other aspect.

Since 1998 the Alliance has developed an access policy aiming to facilitate access to international voluntary service for all young people or adults facing exclusion. Through this long experience Access for All Working Group has developed:

- An educational 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 (guidelines on inclusion for organisations, preparation and evaluation tools and forms, 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.

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

The A4AWG is meant to raise awareness, encourage and support members to participate and give visibility towards our international partners. Workcamps can result in a life-long learning experience or a vocational training process. The A4AWG aims to support the member organisations of the Alliance in improving their access to volunteers from all kinds of backgrounds. In this framework, the A4AWG promotes and supports the network by:

- Ensuring the access for all volunteers to workcamps, taking into consideration that locations, the work, the accommodation and the campleaders' skills fit the needs of the volunteers;
- Increasing the number of exchanges of volunteers with fewer opportunities;
- Improving the access of volunteers with fewer opportunities to long term international voluntary projects;
- Empowering volunteers to become ambassadors and promote accessible workcamps for all;
- Communication of the results and impact of the successful exchanges;
- Diversifying the target groups participating in a workcamp;
- Cooperating with other networks, 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.

A good example of the Alliance practices on social inclusion is its participation in the project IVS4Peace (Inclusive Voluntary Project 4 Peace), a project coordinated by CCIVS, in which Alliance as a network and four Alliance member organisations are partners, that aims to include volunteers with fewer opportunities in workcamps with a special focus on migrants, refugees and ethnic minorities, among others.

Chapter 5. Sustainability

The idea of sustainability has 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 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 2017.[1]

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[1] All policy papers can be found on the Alliance Website: http://www.alliance-network.eu/alliance-quality-charter-ivs/

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 but not exclusively by the ESWG. 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.

Over time, the Sustainability Campaign turned into an integral part of the Alliance, hence becoming an underlying permanent feature of the network's life and work. With our sustainability activities, we aim 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.
- Being aware of consumption patterns and being critical about them.
- Creating and engaging in actions to improve the environment.
- Creating and engaging in actions of education for sustainability.

These principles are embedded in the methodological approach of ACTION, EDUCATION and NETWORKING. We want to show that different living habits are necessary and that they are possible by living them in our projects. We want to educate our volunteers, not only through (campleader) trainings, but also through our actions. This is why since 2014, a **common action** is run every year, 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 camp leaders as key multipliers. Acknowledging the comprehensiveness and multifacetedness of sustainability, other thematic working groups of the Alliance, working on social inclusion, migration, and gender equality, were invited to contribute to the creation of the common action from 2017 on.

The WG supports all organisations and volunteers 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.
- **A green office infosheet** with practical tips to improve our actions in the workplace and reduce consumption.
- **The seed-up and regrow booklet** with fun ideas to use kitchen waste and learn about composting.
- **Sustainability games**, a series of games to put in practice in the workcamps in order to learn about environmental sustainability.
- 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.

Every year, usually after the Technical Meeting (TM), the ESWG sends out a reminder to organisations and sister networks to promote sustainability by:

1) Respecting and promoting the principles of our sustainability work, as manifested in the Alliance Policy Paper on Sustainability, especially 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 ESWG.

Alliance recognizes sustainability and networking as a key element of its strategic approach and plan of action. The Sustainability Campaign once emerged from 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 launched a common campaign with its sister networks CCIVS, SCI and NVDA: IVS against Climate Change, later renamed to IVS for Climate Justice.[2] 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. Gender Equality

Alliance supports justice, fairness and equal opportunities for everyone and works towards an equal society with no gender gaps or bias. Alliance IVS projects are open to any volunteer, regardless of origin, gender or sexual orientation. Nevertheless, it is still a challenge to ensure equality in all aspects. To promote gender equality as one of the core values of Alliance and to assure the development of the network and its member organisations with regard to the topic, the Gender Equality Working Group (GEWG) has been established by the Alliance General Assembly in 2016.

The GEWG provides educational opportunities for Alliance members and raises awareness on gender equality through means such as (social) media communication, common actions and campaigns. It provides information and tools that can be implemented to address organization's needs in regard to the topic. The working group also supports networking with sister IVS networks in order to join forces and create a common strategy on how to address gender equality within the IVS movement. It also raises awareness on the topic within the network by conducting a gender watch at Alliance meetings and general assemblies measuring the extent of equal participation.

From 2016 to 2018, the GEWG has been running the "Not in my camp!" campaign aimed at promoting gender equality in IVS and raising awareness on issues such as gender-based discrimination, sexism, sexual harassment and LGBTQI+ phobia.[3] As part of the campaign, the working group created material and tools to be used by member organisations to raise awareness and promote gender equality in their projects. The GEWG supports all organisations and volunteers with the following tools:

- A **consent infosheet** about the notion of consent and how to be more ethical in daily interactions with others.
- A **coming out infosheet** explaining what "coming out" means and how to support a person coming out.
- **Comics on gender-based discrimination** in IVS: these comics aim at raising awareness

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2   More information on the common campaign can be found here: http://www.alliance-network.eu/our-campaigns/ivs-for-climate-justice/ (05/10/2018)

3   More information on the campaign can be found here: http://www.alliance-network.eu/our-campaigns/not-in-my-camp/ (05/10/2018)

and stimulating debate among volunteers and participants in any kind of IVS project.
- **Infographics about gender** that can be used to clarify the meaning of gender-related concepts and terminology.
- Three **short message videos** on sexual harassment, physical and sexual violence as well as the criminalization of same-sex relationships.
- **External toolkits and reports** on gender-based hate speech and discrimination, the global gender gap, gender & conflict analysis, gender-based violence in the LGBTIQ+ community as well as gender, sexuality and body, collected and reviewed by the working group.

In 2020, the GEWG coordinated an Erasmus+ KA1 training course in collaboration with the Alliance Pool of Trainers (PoT). In the project with the name P.R.O.U.D. ("Promoting Rights and Opportunities to Understand Diversity"), 26 young volunteers and camp leaders from 13 different IVS organisations discussed the topic of gender equality in IVS and created a toolkit together. The *Gender Equality Toolkit for Camp Leaders*[4] is meant for all group leaders, trainers, facilitators and youth workers who are interested in learning more about gender equality and how to deal with gender-based conflicts or issues in workcamps.

The Alliance also offers a free online course on the topic of gender equality through its online learning platform in order to help build capacities among member organisations' staff and volunteers.

The GEWG invites all organizations to promote gender equality by
- Using and sharing the material and tools concerning gender equality and gender-based discrimination in IVS provided by the working group.
- Participating in campaigns and thus raising awareness and empowering staff and volunteers to deal better with gender-related issues in IVS projects.

Chapter 7. 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 of our activities.

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

The Alliance considers workcamps as possible non-formal educational tools through a learning by doing approach, peer-learning and reflective activities, aimed at the volunteers realizing their own learning outcomes. Through all its activities, the Alliance seeks to empower young people and accompany them in their learning process, and 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 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.

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4   The toolkit can be found here: http://www.alliance-network.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Alliance-Gender-Equality-Toolkit-for-Camp-Leaders-GEWG.pdf

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.

The educational activities of the Alliance are as follows:[5]

- Study Session (StS)
- Long-Term Training Course for Trainers (LTTC), every 2 years
- Advanced Training Course (ATC)
- General Conference (GC), every 2 years

Moreover, each member organisation of the Alliance organizes their own educational activities, such as Trainings of Campleaders (national and/or international) and Post-Season Events for volunteers.

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

- Long Term Training Course (LTTC) 2020: "Value based approach in IVS projects" - February / May / October 2020 - Germany / Hungary / Serbia

- Congressino 2019: "Future Dimensions of Volunteering", a cycle consisting of the January meeting of Working Groups and Committees, May meeting of Executive Committee and Alliance Development Committee and a final strategic event-seminar in November 2019 - Greece / Germany / Belgium

- "Experience - Record - Share - Involve" ERSI 2018, a 3-activity project on volunteer engagement strategy, composed by Joint Meeting of Working Groups, Social Media training and a Conference on monitoring and evaluation - January / May/ October - Germany / Hungary / Spain

- Staff Meetings 2012, 2013, 2015;

- Long Term Training Course (LTTC) 2017: "Workcamp studies 2.0." – February / September 2017 – Greece / Italy / Spain

- 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";

Non-formal education is also present in the **management of the network** through the 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 a large range of methods: exchanging good practices in groups, interactive workshops, creative techniques, group discussion techniques such as World Café and similar, discussions in plenary, various methods for reflecting and evaluation, role-playing etc.

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[5] For more information about every single event please consult the Alliance Training and Educational Policy Paper: http://www.alliance-network.eu/alliance-quality-charter-ivs/

Conclusion

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

The Alliance provides individuals through their member organisations 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, gender equality and accessibility.

The Alliance has developed several tools and methods on impact and quality of IVS projects, and is, as of 2018, a partner in the STEP project coordinated by CCIVS which aims at developing a common evaluative framework on the impact of IVS on local communities and volunteers.[6]

The Alliance stresses the importance of volunteering on an international level and lobbies for IVS, environmental sustainability, social inclusion, gender equality, peace and recognition of non-formal education and mobility. In terms of advocacy and visibility the highest priority of the Alliance is to be 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 the network's activities, as well as better cooperation with IVS and other networks (CCIVS, SCI, NVDA, SEEYN, UN Volunteers, YEN).

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[6]   For more information on the project: https://step2changeblog.wordpress.com/author/ccivs/