

Erasmus+ Volunteering at SEEDS Iceland

Role and tasks of the volunteer:

The scope of activities for the volunteers will change during their stay in Iceland and can be chronologically divided in the following four (4) different stages:

1. **Arrival.** SEEDS will organise an on-arrival project-specific orientation training.
During this time volunteers will be given tools and theoretical knowledge combined with practical tasks in order to prepare them for the stay and the activities. Volunteers will be introduced to few main topics; SEEDS as the hosting organisation, Iceland as the hosting country, intercultural awareness and leadership. Intercultural, recreational and integration activities will be organised with the active involvement of the volunteers.
2. **Pilot project.** Before leading their own workcamps, volunteers have a pilot project with experienced leaders. This aims at building confidence with the camp environment, to experience how a workcamp is run, to face possible challenging situations and to try out the tools given in training stage.
3. **Workcamps.** After the training, the volunteers will run and lead workcamps, sometimes alone and sometimes with a co-leader. Workcamps are the most common form of short-term volunteering and are projects where a group of volunteers live and work together, generally between 9-14 days. There are different types of projects and they can be:
 - **In winter:**
 - Awareness campaigns and global education projects.
 - Artistic projects.
 - Projects focused on environmental education.
 - **In summer:**
 - Nature conservation or environment protection: removing invasive growth, building of walking paths or hiking trails, cleaning of the coastline, reforestation and erosion control works, etc.
 - Renovation and restoration: construction or renovation of a building, monument or community building, etc.
 - Cultural and sports events: support of festivals, celebrations, sport events, and other gatherings.
 - Gardening projects; helping maintaining the Botanical gardens of Reykjavík, and gardening in small towns around Iceland.
 - Awareness campaigns and global education projects.
 - Artistic projects.
 - Projects focused on environmental education.
4. **Evaluation.** After the camp season, an evaluation of their experience will be undertaken. The feedback and input will be used in order to plan next years and to raise the quality of the voluntary service.

International Workcamp leader – roles and responsibilities:

International workcamps bring together volunteers from different backgrounds aiming at building up understanding & encouraging peace while working for an identified need, groups range from 5 to 30 volunteers. The responsibilities and role of a work camp leader will vary according to the host and the type of project, but the following list gives an idea of what they could normally be responsible for:

- *Being SEEDS ambassador and representative on the project sites. Representing SEEDS to the local host/community and to the short-term volunteers.*
- *Helping the short-term volunteers (workcamps' participants) feel comfortable with the project, welcoming and talking to them, to establish a good relationship and to ensure they do not have avoidable problems, and that they remain happy with the project.*
- *Acting as the link between the participants, the hosting project and SEEDS, trying to ensure that the aims, needs and desires of all three can be compromised to provide the best possible result.*
- *Motivating the group to ensure that they are able to carry out the agreed programme, such as organising the day-to-day working schedule and ensuring that everyone gets to work on time.*
- *Co-ordinating arrangements such as shopping lists, meals and cleaning to ensure that the needs of the short-term volunteers are met.*
- *Ensuring sufficient balanced food and other health and safety considerations of the participants.*
- *Involving everyone so that nobody feels excluded from the group or alienated from the project and managing the group dynamics so that it does not split into sub-groups.*
- *Providing the time and space for ideas to develop from within the group, particularly in relation to the social programme, but also having ideas for activities that can be organised for the group in the evenings and free time.*
- *Planning and participating in possible free time activities for/with the groups.*
- *Giving SEEDS feedback regarding the outcome and evaluations of the single projects.*

The work in the field can be very demanding and volunteers will be highly active, which requires a great deal of energy, enthusiasm, self initiative and ability to work under extreme conditions, travelling and moving very often, meeting new people and leaving them after relatively short time. Volunteers need to take enough days free (in average 4) between workcamps to rest and be ready for the next one. The workcamps will be ongoing, one after another, in stage 3.

In all of our summer workcamps with local hosts SEEDS has a local on-the-site project coordinator, who runs the project and who knows the local circumstances. The local on-the-site project coordinator has been informed and trained by SEEDS in the different issues that entail working with international volunteers, as the safety and risk assessment for the project to ensure all quality, learning, and welfare standards of each volunteer. During this stage Erasmus+ volunteers will be under supervision of the organisation and the volunteers will have regular contact through phone and occasional project visits by SEEDS staff.

Environmental Messenger – roles and responsibilities:

*Environmental messengers will get the opportunity to organise several **environmental** work camps during their stay. They will be responsible for leading the groups of short-term volunteers, organising activities, events and work that raise awareness amongst the participants about relevant environmental and global issues (e.g. sustainability, recycling, waste management, water or air pollution, soil erosion, reforestation, fish stocks depletion, climate change, fair trade, healthy living, eco-tourism, etc.).*

This will be an exciting opportunity for the volunteers to engage an active community to think about and act on environmental issues. To support the theoretical base for the work camp, volunteers will have the opportunity to go on excursions and arrange activities to put the theory into action. They will develop important skills in team-work, organisation and leadership.

SEEDS will help the volunteers by providing access to a network of contacts and information as well as advice and support from the staff.

*These type of workcamps, called **Environmentally Aware** have been developed by former Environmental Messengers of SEEDS, and will be located in one of our SEEDS volunteers bases in Reykjavík.*

In general, environmental messengers are responsible for the following:

- *Being SEEDS ambassador and representative on the project sites. Representing SEEDS to the local host/community and to the short-term volunteers.*
- *Helping the short-term volunteers (workcamps' participants) feel comfortable with the project, welcoming and talking to them, to establish a good relationship and to ensure they do not have avoidable problems, and that they remain happy with the project.*
- *Developing activities such as study sessions, workshops, group discussions, role games, practical activities on the field, presentations, exhibitions, different exercises, etc. All those, as mentioned before, oriented to raise awareness, to exchange perspectives and knowledge but also to encourage partakers to become active citizens in the development and shape of the world and environment we live in.*
- *Taking care of the adequate use of resources & supplies in the workcamps. Part of the messengers' task is to help in turning the activities more environmental by suggesting practical actions that should be taken.*
- *Organising an International evening; which is a social event accompanied by typical dishes prepared by the participants and in some occasions with games and music or short presentations from their countries. Through this, we aim at fostering the cross-cultural side of the projects.*
- *Organising free-time activities for the participants. These activities might include hikes to discover the surroundings, field trips, sport exchanges, excursions, inviting locals to share their knowledge or skills with the International group, facilitation of events.*
- *Updating either directly or through the staff of the organization, the official web-site of SEEDS posting information about the past, present and future activities within the frame of their project.*

The work in the field can be very demanding and volunteers will be highly active, which requires a great deal of energy, enthusiasm, self initiative and ability to work under extreme conditions, travelling and moving very often, meeting new people and leaving them after relatively short time.

Volunteers need to take enough days free (in average 4) between workcamps to rest and be ready for the next one. The workcamps will be ongoing one after each other in stage 3. Volunteers are entitled to 2 days of holidays per every month of service at SEEDS; usually we are flexible on this especially when family or friends visit the volunteers while in Iceland.

During this stage the Erasmus+ volunteers will be under personal supervision of the organisation and the volunteers will have regular contact through phone and occasional project visits by SEEDS staff.

Volunteers will work a maximum five days a week, for a maximum of 38 hours a week (between 7 and 8 hours a day). Weekends are usually free but if requested by the hosting projects, volunteers might work during the weekend and get days off during the usual working days, Monday to Friday.

Food will be either provided by SEEDS, while volunteers find themselves in the accommodation in Reykjavík, or in the hosting projects during the different workcamps. Food shopping will be done according to SEEDS standard shopping list, ensuring that every volunteer has a balanced diet.

Volunteers will stay in a shared flat (with usually 4 people per room) in Reykjavík and will return there for the breaks between the workcamps. They will most likely stay at Miklabraut 40, located close to the center of Reykjavík. In this apartment for the Long Term Volunteers (Erasmus+ and other) they can relax during their free time between camps.

*The SEEDS houses are for the use of SEEDS' current volunteers, interns/trainees and staff. Please note that visitors are **not allowed** to stay in the houses, the houses are exclusively for the use of our current teams.*

Domestic transport to the workcamps and back to the accommodation in Reykjavík will be provided by SEEDS.

In summer, during the workcamps in the countryside, volunteers stay there for periods of usually 2 weeks and no transport to Reykjavík is available (no matter if they are close to the city as in Mosfellsbaer or far away as Egilsstaðir).

During the summer workcamps, accommodation is provided by the local hosts and as they will move from project to project, the situation will vary according to the facilities available. SEEDS ensures that hosting conditions meet quality standards, so that volunteers enjoy a good and safe place to live in the workcamps.