



Environmental messengers

A. Project environment: profile of the organisation, regular activities and local community.

SEEDS is an Icelandic non-governmental, non-for-profit organisation with international scope. Our main field of activities is related to the promotion of cultural understanding through the work on nature-oriented, outdoors and environmental issues.

SEEDS, aims at promoting respect for cultural diversity, mutual understanding and environment protection through activities which empower, promote and aid people of all ages, cultures, and backgrounds. Seeds provides them possibilities and opportunities to live, study, experience, exchange, research and work together.

Based on real projects as exchanges, international camps, research activities, on-field work, voluntary service, educational programmes, seminars, SEEDS, gives space, time and room to the participants in our activities to face challenging situations, which will enable them to broaden their perspectives, own opinions and positions about themselves, the environment we are living in and our active role in the future development of the world in terms of peace, tolerance, cross-cultural learning and environmental sustainability.

We strongly believe that everyone deserves to learn and experience about the world through personal involvement and exploration, to come to know and understand it better, in order to appreciate and take care of it.

Active citizenship is a cornerstone for development, and we promote this through a programme focused on active involvement. We want to empower people of all ages, cultures, and nationalities to protect the environment by effective citizen action. We involve both young people as adults in our activities to develop in them the values and skills for global citizen cooperation and earth protection.

SEEDS was founded in 2005 and relies on a small staff and long term volunteers. At the moment it gets support from its founding members. Since 2005 SEEDS has grown to become one of the leading non-governmental organisations in its field in Iceland. In the year 2009 SEEDS organised more than 40 workcamps all over Iceland, hosting over 400 short term volunteers, 13 long term European Voluntary Service volunteers, few long-term volunteers and interns.

The project will be divided in 4 main parts, on-arrival training and language orientation (stage 1), preparation of the work in the field (2), work in the field itself (3) and evaluation and planning for next season (4).

Volunteers will most likely be in Reykjavík during during stage 1, as SEEDS has organised the activities in/close to the capital of Iceland due to the easy connection to many insitutions, the possibilities to invite guests and lecturers and to organise study visits.

The second stage, will take place partly in Reykjanesbaer and partly in some of our workcamps in the country-side, there volunteers may be living at a small local township, village or in an isolated protected area.

After having received enough preparation and having acquired the basic knowledge, skills and competences to lead the projects, volunteers pass to the third stage, which comprises most of the time in Iceland and where volunteers work at different locations all around the country.

SEEDS Iceland works closely with local communities, their administration or authorities and with other Icelandic associations. Jointly we develop projects aimed at fulfil an identified need or to help in the development of particular actions that are already being undertaken. The projects may be hosted for example at a small isolated village, at a National park or protected area, in the capital of the country, its surroundings, at an island off the coast of Iceland, etc.

The last part of the project will be held at the permanent accommodation location of the volunteers in Reykjanesbaer and in the SEEDS office; EVS volunteers will have their residence in a shared house or apartment at the premises of a former NATO military base in the Reykjanes Peninsula, 45 Km away from the capital Reykjavík. The former military base is being turned into a dynamic knowledge and academic community and SEEDS Iceland is happily being part of this process, as we are also contributing to make this happen.

The volunteers usually bond closely together, so the international EVS community is often a lively interesting environment in which to live.

While volunteers move from project to project, the accommodation will be available for them to rest and to evaluate the projects, as well as to prepare and plan those coming up.

In this way, the volunteers will have the unique opportunity to experience Iceland both in its main city and its surroundings but also to work and develop projects in different sites all around the country.

From the beginning on, the project is a group experience, as SEEDS hosts several long-term volunteers simultaneously and they share the different tasks common to a usual household.

In some of our projects volunteers share a big room with all the participants (short-term volunteers) of the workcamps and in some others; there will be a couple of shared rooms. Conditions will change from site to site and depend on the facilities available from our local hosts; standards may be very different from one location to another one.



SEEDS always ensures that our volunteers have adequate lodging places that are well equipped; nevertheless some of them will be very basic; while others may be luxurious.

Whilst SEEDS itself could still be considered as a newly established organisation, it is growing every year. Each year more new and exciting workcamps are developed and more and more short term and long term volunteers are hosted. Its members and staff have a wide experience being themselves volunteers and also actively involved in organising, planning, executing and following up activities under the frame of the Programme YOUTH of the European Commission. Moreover, expertise on non-formal and formal educational activities supported by the Council of Europe and the European Youth Foundation, as the Leonardo Programme hold by either staff or members are valued as one of the strenghts of the new organisation.

B. Proposed activities for international volunteers:

The basic aim of the Environmental messenger project is to raise awareness about environmental issues both within Icelanders, being hosts of SEEDS workcamps, and among the International volunteers taking part in the mentioned projects. Environmental messengers will also be a source of knowledge on specific topics of significant relevance about environment, nature protection and sustainable development. They will encourage the actors in those projects to undertake simple but easy-to-implement actions which will affect the way we use our resources and we deal with the environment and the world we live in.

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

- 1. Volunteers will arrive in Iceland either in April or May. After arrival and once all have arrived, SEEDS will organise and carry out an on-arrival training and language orientation workcamp-seminar.*

During this period of time volunteers will be given enough tools and theoretical knowledge combined with practical tasks in order to prepare them for the stay in Iceland and the activities to be undertaken on the field at later stage. Volunteers will be introduced to four main topics, the hosting organisation, Iceland, environment and leadership. Intercultural, recreational and integration activities will be organised with the active involvement of the volunteers. This will also be a time where you will meet fellow European Voluntary Service volunteers from all over Europe. Subsequently, SEEDS will use the training to help you get to know each other and establish a good atmosphere amongst the group of long-term volunteers.

In 2009, there were 13 EVS volunteers coming from countries such as Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Italy, Latvia, Portugal, Slovakia, the Netherlands and the UK.

- 2. Before the starting date of the first international volunteers' camp (which usually is at the end of May or beginning of June), the volunteers will take an active role during their preparation to become Environmental messengers.*

Preparation will include intensive research on particular topics related to Environment, ecology, sustainable development and efficient use of resources. Apart from these suggested main



topics, volunteers are also welcome to emphasize in particular themes according to their areas of interest. The staff and members of SEEDS will provide constant guidance and will follow up on the development during this stage. However, despite this, it is important to realise that developing successful environmental activities requires both initiative and commitment.

Activities might also include getting in contact with the communities hosting the international volunteers' camps organised by SEEDS and with the international volunteers willing to attend them, in order to filter possible common issues of interest (e.g. recycling, waste management, water and air pollution, soil erosion, reforestation, fish stocks depletion, climate change, the United Nations Millennium Development goals, fair trade, healthy living, eco-tourism, etc.) and to be able to prepare in advance special activities (like workshops, presentations, exhibitions, games, discussions) related to those topics.

Volunteers, **Environmental messengers**, shall be able to collect and acquire enough knowledge on few topics of high relevance for the activities to be carried out in the next stage. Additionally, they shall start drafting an "Environmental/Eco-guide" on a topic(s) of their preference, which will be then finalised at the end of their voluntary service, thanks to the whole experience gained working hand-in-hand on the field, both for the Icelandic local communities and international volunteers. This "Environmental/Eco-guide" will then serve as a knowledge database and an important tool to be used in the future.

During the first two stages volunteers will have weekends free and work will be carried out within usual week-working-days, Monday to Friday.

3. On field work, to take place between June and September/October. International volunteers' camps will then be executed and EVS (long-term) volunteers will join those camps. Workcamps are the most common form of short-term volunteering and are projects where a group of (usually young) unskilled volunteers work and live together on a project which has been identified by a local community or a project working with that community. They generally last for 2 up to 3 weeks. The first workcamp will most likely take place at the end of May or start of June. This, in the past, has been like a 'training' workcamp, with the majority of participants being EVS with only a small amount of short term volunteers, This will be a great opportunity for Environmental Messengers to practise their activities in a comfortable environment.

The types of the projects are mainly nature or environmental oriented. This can include ecological research, removing invasive growth (lupina), building of walking paths or hiking trails, cleaning of the coastline, reforestation and erosion control works, construction or renovation of a community building (such as a school or medical block), monument or community centre, etc... There are sometimes cultural and study projects, agricultural projects and others depending basically on the identified need of the local community.

International workcamps bring together volunteers from different nationalities and backgrounds aiming at building up international understanding and therefore encouraging peace while working for an identified need of the local community. Groups' sizes vary between 5 and 20 participants.

The responsibilities of an Environmental messenger will vary according to the hosting community, the type of project and areas of interest of the participants. The following list gives an idea of what they could normally be responsible for :

** Bringing to Icelandic hosting communities, its inhabitants and international participants in the projects, activities related to environment, nature protection and sustainable development. This will be the main task given to the Environmental messengers.*

** Organising actions addressed to the different actors present or affected by the international workcamps hosted by SEEDS. In that sense, the Environmental messengers shall strive for an active involvement of members of the community and workcampers. Subsequently, by the end, apart from raising awareness, sharing of knowledge and teaching of easy-to-put-in-practice skills on particular issues, you will also stimulate the inter- and cross-cultural side of the projects.*

** Developing activities such as study sessions, workshops, group discussions, role games, practical activities on the field, presentations, exhibitions, different exercises, etc.. All those, once again 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.*

** Apart from being on charge of distribution of theoretical knowledge, they will also take a leading role within the workcamp, making it a whole environmental-friendly project and experience. In other words, they will apply as far as possible all the theory and transform it into practice, which will moreover be an example for the participants in order to turn that knowledge into practical skills in their daily life. For example, recycling in remote areas of Iceland is difficult due to cost and other difficulties such as transportation. Environmental Messengers, could strive to educate workcampers on recycling in Iceland, and aim to make them recycle within workcamps.*

** Taking care of the adequate use of resources and supplies inside the international volunteers' workcamps. A significant part of Environmental messengers' task is to help in turning the activities inside the camp more environmentally friendly by suggesting about practical actions that should be taken.*

** Collecting, gathering and processing of information of relevance for the International volunteers, Icelandic hosting community and SEEDS.*

** Producing resource material, documents and information related to the workcamp, which will be then distributed at the end of the project to the international participants and the hosting communities. This material might include articles of particular interest, summaries of the activities organised, results achieved during the length of the camp, pictures and videos made within the project, evaluations and reports of the actions, contact data of international and Icelandic participants, sets of recommendations for upcoming projects and all additional data which the people involved in the workcamp might find of important relevance.*

** Organising, jointly with the workcamp leader(s) and the local contact(s) in the community, an International evening. The International evening is a social event, where locals are invited to mingle and interact with the International volunteers. Through this, we aim at fostering the cross-cultural side of the projects and at giving Icelanders the chance to learn about voluntary service, the Programme YOUTH of the European Commission and the different opportunities offered in this field via non-formal educational activities.*

** Assisting the leader(s) of the workcamp in the organisation of free-time activities for the participants. These activities might include hikes and walks to discover the area and surroundings in the Icelandic community, field trips, sport exchanges with the locals, excursions to sites of touristic interest during the weekends, inviting locals to share their knowledge or skills with the International group, facilitation of events inside the group.*

** Helping the volunteers feel comfortable with the project, welcoming and talking to them, to establish a good individual relationship and to ensure they do not have avoidable problems, and that they remain happy with the project.*

** Updating constantly, either directly or through the staff of the organisation, the official web-site of SEEDS, SEE beyond borderS, posting actual information about the past, present and future activities within the frame of their project.*

Volunteers will have enough days free after each work camp in order to rest and prepare the next project. In any case these four (4) months between June and September are extremely demanding and volunteers will be highly active, which will require a great deal of energy, enthusiasm, self initiative and ability to work under extreme conditions, travelling and moving in Iceland very often, meeting new people and leaving them after relatively short periods of time.

During this stage volunteers will no longer be under personal supervision of the organisation, but in any case contact will be constant through telephone and some regular visits.

4. At the end of the camps' season, volunteers will return to their main accommodation base and a structured evaluation of their experience as of the projects will be undertaken. After evaluating the work behind, all the feedback and input provided will be used in order to plan next years' projects and to raise the quality of the programme offered both for long-term as camps' volunteers.

SEEDS would like to involve the long-term volunteers in future activities under the frame of the Programme YOUTH as Seminars, Training sessions, Exchanges, which will then be arranged in order to share with similar organisations the knowledge gained, gathered and compiled. In this way, the work will have a wider European impact in the sense that there will be an active flow of information (input and feedback) between organisations or entities coordinating similar activities at a larger scale than at the Icelandic level.

An important part of Environmental messengers' work, during their whole stay in Iceland, is to assist in making all activities of SEEDS more environmental-friendly, advising about practical steps that should be implemented

C. Target group:

We would like volunteers applying for this project to have a motivation for working with international groups on mostly nature-protection and conservation projects. English language skills are of advantage, while Icelandic is not a requirement.

Volunteer's enthusiasm and interest in order to engage with people, to work in teams but also willingness to accept personal responsibilities are highly appreciated.

A readiness to work with flexibility in changing or developing situations is essential, as well as an ability to occasionally work in high-pressure situations.

Particular interest in environmental and sustainability issues might be very useful when developing activities for the groups.

Gender is of no importance, but volunteers have to be between 18 and 30 years old.

Ethnic groups, religion, sexual orientation or political opinion are not taken into account.

There are no special or specific qualifications or practical skills needed, as training will be given.



In order to fill vacancies for this particular project, and once it receives the accreditation to host EVS volunteers; we will have at our disposal the very powerful tool of the European database on accredited host organizations which can be found on the Internet at: http://ec.europa.eu/youth/evs/aod/hei_en.cfm

Additionally, the project will be uploaded to our website and interested candidates can always follow the contact link and inquire about the possibilities to apply, visiting: <http://www.seeds.is>

Selection of candidates will be made according to the deadlines of the Youth in Action programme and the decision-making process will be based on volunteer's motivations to join the project. Guidelines are followed to ensure that our groups of volunteers are formed by a multicultural, international array of individuals and also to ensure that a gender and age balance are achieved.

Interested individuals that contact us will be asked to send us a carefully prepared Curriculum Vitae (CV), a motivation letter and a SEEDS questionnaire. Once received and evaluated, SEEDS' staff and board conduct telephone interviews with the pre-selected candidates, and make decisions based on the combination of material received as well as presentation and the aforementioned phone conversation.

Recruitment is done through existing contacts in a number of sending organisations and also through new applications which we receive regularly.

Volunteers will not carry out routine tasks or the tasks of professional staff, in order to avoid job substitution, volunteers will be supervised and guided by experienced staff.

The work involved in this project:

- 1. Might be physically demanding and a reasonable level of physical fitness and health is required.*
- 2. Can be intensive and very demanding so both commitment and patience are required.*
- 3. Involves a lot of outdoor activities and, as weather conditions in Iceland are variable and often cold, we recommend volunteers to be prepared for harsh situations, to take with them warm, waterproof clothes and shoes. As working outdoors, we suggest volunteers to bring working and comfortable clothes as well as sturdy walking/hiking shoes/boots. A warm sleeping bag is a must.*
- 4. Means travelling in Iceland very often. Volunteers shall be prepared to be moving around the country for at least 4 months, changing living conditions every 2 or 3 weeks as projects end and start again.*

For more information on the project and details, please visit

<http://www.seeds.is>

http://ec.europa.eu/youth/evs/aod/hei_form_en.cfm?EID=40000069196

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