

INVOLVED.



Placement officer



The Placement Officer



The *Placement Officer* is the germ cell of the entire organisation. He works directly under the managing director and is the main coordinator in the office. This means that he is a contact person for the partner organisations, incoming participants, the workcamp coordinators, the managing director and other people involved in the administration/organisation alike. He evaluates applications of both workcamp participants and long-term volunteers, such as EVS, takes bookings for transport and accommodation, initiates and looks after ongoing visa proceedings, helps the workcamp coordinators and the driver with the preparation of their tasks and tries to answer any requests all these people might contact him for.

Profile

Field of Work

Administration, Human Resources, Social Work

Tasks

- Communicating with international partner organisations.
- Preparing and distributing documents concerning the placement procedure.
- Dealing with applications of foreign volunteers applying for placements.
- Taking care of participants' bookings for the WF accommodation or minibus.
- Initiating and looking after visa proceedings for participants.
- Maintaining the organisation's databases on projects/bookings/information brochures/trainings/others and the WF website.
- Contacting the coordinators of the local long-term projects and visiting these projects.
- Answering any incoming request of participants, international partners and others.
- Any other administrative tasks on the request of the general director.
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Skills

Very good level of English (spoken and written) is a must, competence in the prevalent software packages (MS Office), good organisation and communication skills.

Note: As the work of the Placement Officer comprises many different aspects, the following explanations are only a rough outline. Detailed information, as well as the practical use of the databases and software applications, should be gathered on the job.

Conditions

Organisations provide the placement officer, accommodation and food

More information about the tasks

Communicating with International Partner Organizations

One of the Placement Officer's main tasks is to survey and decide over applications from volunteers who want to participate in a (or several) WF workcamp.

To make an application, a participant needs a sending organisation in his home country. Most of the volunteer organisations are affiliated to large organisation networks such as Alliance and SCI. They function both as sending and as hosting organisations – as does WF by the way. It is only because not many Icelanders are keen on working in a foreign country without remuneration, and because there are not many Icelanders anyway, that WF works mostly as a hosting organisation.

A volunteer's application is submitted to a sending organisation and, if approved, forwarded to WF, the hosting organisation. Thus, the Placement Officer gets, especially in the first half of the season, a lot of placement requests from various sending organisations from all over Europe and elsewhere. If there are no objections to accept the applicant, the Placement Officer checks in the e-Vet system the requested workcamp for the following topics: available places, gender ratio (a difference of 4 between the number of female and male participants is the maximum; i.e. for example 4 males, 8 females is OK), and nationalities (30% participants from the same country is the maximum). In general, WF tries to create mixed workcamp groups, also in terms of age, so that the mutual learning experience is maximised. Whenever a participant is accepted, his data, provided on the volunteer exchange forms VEF, is inserted in the electronic volunteer system e-Vet. He is then automatically on the participant list of the workcamp selected for him. Subsequently, the sending organisation is informed by e-mail, with an info sheet of the camp attached. On this info sheet, which should be regularly updated, generic information on Iceland and the concept of workcamps is given as well as specific details for each camp such as the work to be performed, the meeting point and the costs for the minibus option. The sending organisation forwards this to the participant so that he can plan his journey.

Should a placement request be rejected, in most cases because it does not correspond to one of the three aforementioned parameters, the sending organisation is informed and an alternative placement is suggested. Please see the templates in the appendix for exemplary correspondence with volunteer organisations.

In the volunteer field, it is common to send out lists to the partner organisations with an overview of the workcamps including the number of free places in each camp at a certain time point. According to these so-called Friday lists, the partner organisations can adjust their placement requests. It is important as well to update the WF partners



about any changes in the camp schedule, for example if there is a number of free places due to cancellations, if new camps are created, and if camps are already fully booked. Apart from the placement of volunteers, correspondence with partner organisations can also include requests for info sheets or other information or individual requests about or on behalf of participants.

Communicating with Participants

While the Placement Officer primarily communicates with the sending organizations about placements, once a participant is accepted and receives the info sheet he can start to plan his trip and get in touch directly with WF, for example if he wants to make use of the WF accommodation and minibus option. Estimated 70% of the participant do so on average, so the Placement Officer has to take care of a lot of booking requests. The types of requests and enquiries depend on the level of information given to the participants beforehand. This is why the information in info sheets and circular e-mails, especially regarding addresses and meeting points, has to be as accurate and ample as possible.

It is exceptional for a volunteer organisation that WF offers transport and accommodation to their participants. In most other countries, the participants usually meet near to their camp site and organise their travel and accommodation individually. However since many parts of Iceland are not easily accessible and travelling around can be difficult it is an obvious idea to help people with this, it is an offer to the participants to make the travel and the stay before and after their camp already part of their common experience.

For both the accommodation and the minibus bookings there is a database, where a participant's data can be inserted. The conscientious maintenance of the databases is vital for the work of the Placement Officer as well as the driver and the director. In the minibus database, additional information can be inserted such as where a participant is to be picked up, late arrivals, early departures, one way bookings etc. Once an accommodation or minibus booking has been accepted, the participant is sent a booking confirmation (see appendix), with additional information, for example an attached map with the way to the WF accommodation.

Apart from bookings, e-mails from participants can convey any requests about travelling to and around Iceland, the facilities in the accommodation or the workcamp (Is there Internet in the house? Will there be soap in the showers??), or anything one can imagine (Do we *really* need hiking boots for the hiking camp?). The Placement Officer takes care that the enquiries are answered as comprehensively as possible and that important information is passed over to the leader or the driver and inserted in the



databases. Sometimes it is the parents or families of a participant that contact the Placement Officer to enquire about his whereabouts or to send him mail.

Visa

Iceland, although not being part of the EU, is part of the *Schengen Zone*, in which free travelling without the requirement of a visa is guaranteed. Some participants, however, living in countries outside the *Schengen Zone*, for instance Russia or Ukraine, require a visa to travel to Iceland. Therefore, an invitation has to be issued and sent to the responsible embassy by WF (sending the invitation letter by fax should be fine). WF holds templates of visa invitation letters on the main server (see appendix). In many countries, it is the Danish embassy that takes care of the Icelandic visa proceedings. Upon the reception of the invitation letter, the responsible authority invites the participants to present himself with his documents to get the visa. It is the Placement Officer's task to initiate this process and to keep track of it, if necessary by contacting the sending organization or the issuing authority so that the participant gets his visa in time, which is necessary for him to book his flight and eventually come to Iceland.

Working with long-term Volunteers/EVS

Most often, the Placement Officer is not a volunteer in the EVS scheme, but for instance a Leonardo di Vinci intern. This means that he might arrive earlier than the EVS volunteers, and that his stay is subject to different conditions. A possible duration of an internship as Placement Officer is preferably 6 months – in this case, the intern is involved in preparing the season, welcoming the EVS volunteers, all the activities during the whole season as well as post-season activities such as the final evaluation and updating material for the following year.

Although he has different tasks than the EVS volunteers, who mostly coordinate workcamps, the Placement Officer takes part in the on-arrival training and integrates in the group as far as the fulfilment of his tasks allow and he himself chooses. It shall be underlined that the building of personal relationships (not too personal, necessarily...) between the various volunteers and interns, which takes place mostly during the on-arrival training, is a crucial base for a successful and enjoyable cooperation during the workcamp season. The WF phone network is a valuable tool that ensures that the volunteers can communicate with each other after the training period without any extra costs in order to coordinate the work, or even only to exchange thoughts and experience.

The Placement Officer is, alongside the managing director and the EVS coordinator, the main reference point for the EVS volunteers in the office. Whereas the coordinators lead workcamps at different places on the whole island, and also the managing director and,



by definition, the drivers are travelling around a lot, the Placement Officer is a stable factor in the office. He has an overview of the entire camp season, i.e. he knows the schedule of the camps including the leaders of each and also is informed about the logistic processes, notably the driving schedule. The Placement Officer updates this information on a regular basis and makes it available to the volunteers as transparent as possible. This can for example mean that he puts up posters in the office with an overview of ongoing camps and related information.

In general, the Placement Officer is the central reference point for the EVS volunteers before, during, and between their camps. He passes requests and information between the managing director/the administration and the volunteers. He is most often the first one to be addressed for some request or enquiry, and if he cannot help personally, the Placement Officer finds the right person to ask.

The Placement Officer provides information regarding participants, minibus and accommodation bookings etc. to the driver and the coordinator prior to each camp. Furthermore, he takes any requests from coordinators during their camps. This function as coordinator is described in the section below.

It is not the task of the Placement Officer to deal with the EVS volunteers' financial matters, such as reimbursement of travel or food expenses or providing pocket money. For these issues the volunteers should directly address the managing director.

Coordination between the Administration, the Driver and the Work Camp Coordinator

Before a workcamp, the Placement Officer collects vital information about the participants and bookings for the minibus and accommodation. He takes a look at the participant list in the e-Vet system and checks if it corresponds to the e-mails from sending organisations and participants, i.e. if all the volunteers who have been accepted by e-mail are also in the system, if there have been any last minute cancellations, etc. He also checks the VEF. As both the camp coordinator and the driver require information about the group, it is useful to arrange a short meeting (30 minutes will do) between the driver, the camp coordinator, and the Placement Officer. The camp coordinator is informed about his group; he gets a participant list and the VEF, which he can copy and from where he can extract detailed information about participants' home addresses and emergency contacts, or special needs such as allergies, handicaps, or special diets.

The Placement Officer also transfers information about accommodation and minibus bookings onto a print-out of the participant list. From there, the driver can see where and how many people are to be picked up, i.e. at the meeting point given in the info sheet, or directly from the accommodation. The Placement Officer also transfers



information he got from e-mails regarding individual itineraries. He marks if he knows about people's means of travel or arrival at the camp site, and especially informs the driver and the leader about late arrivals (or early departures after a camp). This makes sense, as a participant for Eskifjörður might for example arrive by plane in the east at 17:00 and wants to know how he can join his group. The Placement Officer tells him then that he can take a bus from Egilsstaður Airport to Eskifjörður, where he has to wait until the minibus picks him up from a central point such as a petrol station at approx. 22:00. To make sure, contact data between driver/coordinator and participant are exchanged.

In the end of this process, the driver, but also the coordinator, should have an overview over the whereabouts and (Icelandic) itineraries of all his participants. The Placement Officer also stays in touch with the coordinator during the workcamp, and they update each other about these issues.

Often, luggage gets lost at the airport so that participants submit a report to the lost luggage service prior to their departure to the camp site. If the participant leaves for his camp without getting his luggage back in time, the Placement Officer contacts the lost luggage service, tells them where the luggage is to be sent to and tells the camp coordinator where and when the luggage can be expected. Most of the time, the luggage service delivers efficiently and reliably to the nearest domestic airport or bus station (often at a petrol station).

Collecting Money and Book-keeping

The placement officer is responsible for charging the fees for the workcamps and also the fee for the transport to the camps and excursions.

He collects the transport, and a possible participation fee altogether, using the prices given in the info sheets. He writes out receipts indicating:

- Name of participant
- Number of work camp
- Services paid for with exact amount (Acc. (2x) + Transport + Fee)
- Signature.
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Participants can pay either in Icelandic Krona or in Euros. As the exchange rate between these two currencies are subject to change, the placement officer updates this information on this regularly.

