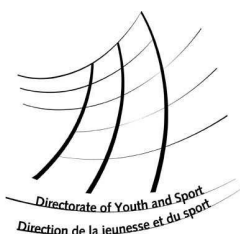




Participation through Preparation

Report of the study session held by
Alliance
in co-operation with the
Directorate of Youth and Sport
of the Council of Europe

European Youth Centre Budapest
3rd February – 10th February 2008



This report gives an account of various aspects of the study session. It has been produced by and is the responsibility of the educational team of the study session. It does not represent the official point of view of the Council of Europe.

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Executive summary

The aim of the study session was to improve youth participation and intercultural dialogue within international youth projects, by focussing on the preparation of young volunteers.

The study session included 29 participants and 5 team members from Alliance member organisations as well as other exchange networks and organisations. Most organisations work mostly with work camps, while others focus on other types of voluntary service. The participants were young volunteers, activists and workers with a multiplying power.

The expected outcome of the study session was a kit for preparation of volunteers for IVS projects, and a strategy on how to use the outcomes of the study session. The preparation kit has been created in the form of a wiki, a collective web page, created during the study session, which includes a preparation kit a collection of educational material used for preparing volunteers, reports from the study session, and lots of other information. The wiki enables everyone to continue the work after the end of the study session, but also makes it possible for other people interested in the topic to join and contribute. The preparation kit is available online and can be viewed by anyone. In addition to a plan for follow-up, a list of recommendations was made to the Alliance and presented to all members at the General Assembly. Several of the recommendations are expected to be implemented in practice.

Initially, the focus of the study session was on why voluntary service is used and what it is that we are trying to achieve by organising these projects.

To get a common understanding of some of the key issues related to the topic, the next sessions were then dedicated to different concepts related to the topic, such as culture, cultural diversity, intercultural learning and participation.

The next session was spent on discussing why the preparation of volunteers is needed and how it can be implemented, with concrete examples of approaches and methodologies.

Based on this, and the preparation done by the participants before the study session, current methods and activities used were shared, and the educational materials used were added to the wiki. Having done this, participants dealt with improving the existing methods and developing new ones. The outcome of this was the preparation kit available in the wiki.

The last part of the study session was spent on planning follow-up activities and agreeing on recommendations to the Alliance.

Ongoing evaluation was carried out during the entire session by having reflection groups at the end of each day, which was used to continuously adapt the program to the needs of the participants. At the end of the study session both oral and written evaluations were performed. In general, the evaluations were very positive, with an average rating for all session of 4.4 on a scale from 1 to 5.

Introduction

The Alliance sees international voluntary service (IVS) projects as an opportunity for young people to live an intercultural experience, and the preparation of volunteers is an important aspect in making sure that the projects become more than just a nice experience. We are currently trying to improve the outcome of the projects organised by member organisations by focussing on the intercultural learning aspects of the projects. This study session is seen as building on top of our previous study sessions, which have focused on different aspects of the same overall topic.

The topic of the study session was decided based on:

- the output of a workshop during the Alliance General Assembly 2006
- a questionnaire about training needs completed by the members
- and discussion in the Alliance Training Needs Working Group

Most member organisations have experiences in preparing volunteers, but very little exchange of ideas has taken place, and a need for improvement is seen.

Aims and objectives

The aim of the study session was to improve youth participation and intercultural dialogue within international youth projects by focussing on the preparation of young volunteers. With the study session we wanted to explore methods and activities that can be used during the preparation to improve the intercultural learning that takes place during the projects.

Objectives:

- to explore methods and activities which can be used to improve youth participation and intercultural dialogue through preparation of volunteers for IVS projects;
- to share examples, both good and bad, practices and experiences in preparation seminars for voluntary service projects when dealing with youth participation and intercultural dialogue;
- to identify links between preparation of young volunteers and successful youth participation of young people;
- to plan a follow-up (on individual, organisational and institutional /Alliance/ levels) with recommendations on each step, when preparing and running an international youth project.

Participants

As part of the program of the study session was based on the participants' experience with the preparation of volunteers, the participants needed to have experience with preparing volunteers for international projects. Experience with intercultural learning and training/facilitation was also considered useful for the study session. All participants needed to be actively involved in their organisation, so that they could take part in follow-up activities after the study session.

The study session was intended for active members of voluntary service organisations who deal with the international projects that are organised, i.e. volunteers, project leaders, trainers, or staff members, multipliers who are able to contribute to the study session and use the outcome and disseminate the knowledge in their organisation.

The participants' profile needed for the study session was the following:

- Active member of an organisation dealing with international youth projects.
- Multipliers: volunteers, project leaders, trainers or staff who can use and help disseminate the knowledge in their organisation.
- Motivated: interested in taking active part in the study session, and in using the output of the study session afterwards.
- Experienced: interested in contributing to the study session with their experience on the topic.
- Able to attend the whole study session.

In addition to this, the diversity of the group and the ability of each participant to use the output of the study session were also considered.

The call for participants was sent to Alliance members organisations, participants in former Alliance trainings and study sessions, as well as partners, guests, and other exchange networks and organisations. In the end five participants from non-Alliance member organisations were selected.

Preparation

Before the start of the study session the participants were asked to spend some time preparing for the session.

The participants were sent an empty poster where they had to fill in information about themselves, their organisation, and how preparation of volunteers is handled in their organisation. The participants then had to send the posters back as they would be used during the first day of the study session.

As sharing experiences and current practices was an important part of the study session, the participants were asked to spend some time before the study session collecting information about how their organisation prepares volunteers (How are volunteers prepared, how many are prepared, how is the preparation handled, etc). They were also asked to try to collect any educational material about preparation which is used in their organisation (programs for seminars, session plans used, description of methods, handbooks, etc).

Contents and flow

An overview of the contents of the study session and a short description of the flow of the sessions is included below.

Why voluntary service

The initial part of the study session focussed on what the aim of voluntary service and work camps is, and what it is we are trying to achieve by having the study session.

Intercultural learning and participation

Based on this we then focussed on two of the main concepts for the study session, intercultural learning and participation.

Why and how

This was then used to discuss why preparation is important and how preparation can/should be done.

Sharing

Knowing the why and how, the focus was on what activities are already done in the organisations, sharing known methods and approaches.

Developing

After a session on how educational activities can be designed, focus was then changed to developing new and improving existing methods and approaches. This was done in a two-day Open Space session, which was used to work on a kit on how to prepare volunteers. This part of the programme ended with presentations of the contents of the preparation kit, so that everyone was aware of all the work that had been done.

Follow-up and recommendations

Having gotten a good start on a preparation kit, the last sessions focussed on how to improve the way preparation is handled, and how the preparation kit could be used after the study session. This included both follow-up activities, as well as recommendations to the Alliance as a network and to its members.

Wiki¹

During the study session a wiki was used for writing daily reports, as well as for recording the outcomes of several sessions. The wiki can be edited by all participants from the study session, and can be viewed by anyone at: <http://sts2008.wetpaint.com>

In addition to allowing all participants to contribute during the study session, the wiki also makes it possible that work be continued after the end of the session.

The wiki includes lots of information about the study session, as well as the preparation carried out in the organisations. So in the following parts references to the wiki will be included.

¹ Wiki - A collaborative website where everyone can add, edit and link information.

Programme – inputs and discussions

During the study session daily reports were written by a group of participants, and the reports are available on the wiki used during the study session (the reports can be found at <http://sts2008.wetpaint.com/page/Report>). For the last couple of sessions the reporting was done as part of other parts of the wiki, and the results are therefore documented there.

In the following an outline of each session is included, as well as summaries of the outcomes/conclusions of the session.

Welcome evening and group building

On Sunday evening everyone met for the welcome evening, which also included a couple of ice breakers and group building games. The first session on Monday was used for a group building exercise with the additional goal of giving the participants a chance to get to know the place they were staying. The exercise was a treasure hunt, where the group had to solve 12 different tasks, and then present the results to the prep-team (a video and some photos of the results are available on the wiki).

Introduction

Introductions: Alliance, CoE, EYCB

First Dines (Alliance Course Director) gave a presentation of the Alliance focussing on:

- What is the Alliance?
 - o What is the aim
 - o Who are the members
- What does the Alliance do
 - o Statistics: number of projects etc.
- How does the Alliance work
 - o Technical platform
 - o Projects
 - o Publications
 - o Events
- The study session

After that Laura (Educational Advisor) with the help of Manuel gave an introduction on the CoE and the EYCB in the form of a radio show. Manuel played a journalist who interviewed Laura about both the CoE and the EYCB, and interview included the following:

- CoE
 - o History
 - o Philosophy
 - o Activities
- An interview with Elisa (prep-team member and member of the Advisory Council) about her work in the CoE.
- EYCB

As part of the radio show the participants could call in and ask questions.

Technicalities: travel reimbursement, smoking, etc.

Introduction to wiki: to get everyone started on working with the wiki a short introduction to the wiki was given.

At the end of the session three committees were created:

- Social committee
- Reporting committee (writing daily reports)
- Energizer committee (prepare and facilitate energizers when needed)

Poster Café - preparation

The participants had filled out a poster with information about themselves before the study session and sent them to the prep-team. The posters had been printed out and the participants were given time to finish them.

Aims & Objectives, Expectations, Our role, Outcome, Motivation, Fears

Initially the prep-team presented their views on the following topics:

What is a study session?

1. A study session is a chance to structurally exchange good practices, ideas, approaches, methods and knowledge in a specific field.
2. A study session may end with the creation of a common statement, strategy, action plan, project proposal, etc.
3. The participants of a study session should be able to contribute and fully participate.

What is the context of the Alliance study session?

1. The will to improve the daily work of its member organisations
2. The will to provide training
3. The lack of common international understanding and practices in the field of preparation of volunteers
4. The importance of preparation when willing to enhance ICL and participation through IVS
5. The need to share educational material, approaches and methods in the field of preparation
6. The will to propose innovative ideas and methods for the preparation of volunteers

What are the aims of the Alliance study session?

1. To improve youth participation and intercultural dialogue within international youth projects, by focussing on the preparation of young volunteers

What are the objectives of the Alliance study session?

1. To explore methods and activities which can be used to improve youth participation and intercultural dialogue through preparation of volunteers for IVS projects
2. To share examples, both good and bad practices and experiences in preparation seminars for voluntary service projects when dealing with youth participation and intercultural dialogue.
3. To identify links between preparation of young volunteers and successful youth participation of young people
4. To plan a follow-up with recommendations on each step when planning and IVS project

Who do we want to reach (target)?

1. International voluntary service organisations
2. Young volunteers, activists and workers with multiplying power

What do we want to concretely achieve (expected outcomes/results)?

1. Booklet collecting our reflections and methods on how to prepare volunteers for IVS projects
2. Strategy on how to use the results of the study session (follow up)

The facilitators/prep team (our role)...

1. Believe in the potential of the group to achieve the best possible results;
2. Will do their utmost to enable the group to share ideas in a safe and respectful environment;
3. Will do their utmost to stimulate creative and positive energy, active participation, full inclusion and constructive feedback;
4. Will seek decisions and achievements that will be owned and implemented by the participants and their organisations;
5. Will share knowledge and experience in order to obtain a balanced level of knowledge and information;

The role of the participants

1. To present the work of their organisations in the field of preparation of volunteers;
2. To share personal and organisational experience with the others;
3. To contribute with personal knowledge and skills;
4. To actively seek exchange, discussion and design of methods;
5. To actively listen to others;
6. To evaluate each working day and the session as well as possible
7. To contribute to the improvement of the study session day by day.

The focus was then switched on to the expectations, motivation and fears of the participants. They were given time to reflect on this, and were then asked to draw this by:

- thinking of a means of transportation and draw it on a piece of paper
- then drawing a path, where the starting point indicated their motivation for coming, the end point their expectations, and any obstacles on the path their fears.

The resulting drawings were discussed in pairs and then put up on the wall. The drawings were used as a starting point for a discussion about the motivation, expectations and fears, as well as how it matched what had been presented by the prep-team. The participants were asked if what had been presented matched what they wanted, or if anything had to be changed. The conclusion of the session was that what had been planned matched the expectations well, and that changes were not needed.

Having agreed on this, it was time to look at how the group was going to work together by getting the group to agree on some common rules. First each participant got some time to think of a rule and write it down. The rules were then written down and shared. The facilitator of the session summarised the proposals, and changes and additions were discussed until common rules, which everyone could agree on, were found. The proposed rules are shown below:



Why voluntary service

The aim of the session was to get a common understanding of what VS is, and what it is we are trying to achieve, by getting participants to reflect on the aim, what we learn from it etc.

Initially the participants were asked to stand in two concentric circles, and then discuss the following questions with the person in front of them.

- Why did you join your first VS project?
- What did you learn?
- Why does your organisation do VS?
- Is VS common in your country? Why?
- What is the aim of VS?

After each question the participants were asked to move either right or left, so that everyone would be standing in front of a new person.

Based on the discussion they had, five randomly selected people were asked to answer the following questions:

- Why do we do VS?
- What is the aim?

Their answers were written down on a white board, and used as a starting point for a discussion.



The outcome included:

- To connect experience and needs (exchange and personal / social needs);
- To give and take;
- To serve actively society (to teach participation);
- Cultural understanding (but also discovery of similarities), respect and awareness;
- To practise democracy (responsibility to each other, involvement);
- To seek common solutions;
- To take and use the full potential of VS!

Intercultural learning and participation

Intercultural learning and voluntary service

As a quick energizer, five songs were played, and the participants had to guess which country the music was from. The participants were then split in four groups, and the groups were asked to create their own culture, without further explanation.

After half an hour of working in the groups, the groups were asked to present their culture in any way they liked. The cultures presented included:

- a space culture of creatures moving and doing things backwards, transmitting thoughts by touching;

- a culture in which communication requires response in a corresponding way and noise is made to restore harmony in case of an unexpected response to effort in communicating;
- a culture without a structurally strict family, where children were allowed to choose their parents every three years, where people shared a belief of universal divinity and where eye-contact was enough to expose ideas and emotions;
- an urban gangsta culture where modern hip-hop idealism forms the core structure of the society,

The presentations of the cultures were then used as a starting point for a discussion in plenary about culture, and the components it consists of. Based on the components that the groups had included in their descriptions, agreement was reached on a number of components. The last part of the discussion focussed on proposals which there was no clear agreement on, discussing what could be considered culture and what were more personal preferences. Some of the components discussed are shown in the picture below:



The goal of this part of the session was to get a common understanding of what culture is, which could then be used as a basis for the next discussions.

The focus was then changed to cultural diversity, and the participants were asked to give a one-minute definition of what cultural diversity is. The proposal included: comparing cultural diversity to the human body, and *to live with freedom in a forest with different types of trees*. After each group had presented their proposal the facilitator asked questions about their definition, and in the end the groups commented on the different proposals.

The groups were then asked to spend some time thinking about the “beauties and difficulties” of cultural diversity. In each of the groups half of them would think of negative points of encountering cultural diversity, while the other half would focus on the positive points. The two halves of the groups then met and discussed their proposals, and the results were summed up in plenary. The positive aspects included: fun, personal development and self-realisation as well as reflecting on one’s own cultural background. The negative aspects included: tendency to make cultural judgements such as something is good versus something else is bad, cultural conflicts in the case of failure of personal flexibility and fear to be rejected because of one’s cultural background.

Having discussed both culture and cultural diversity focus was then moved to intercultural learning. The session used a shortened version of the albatross simulation game as a starting point for

further discussions (see the Alliance Training Handbook for a description of the exercise). As a couple of participants knew the game they were asked to help in the role play. They showed a role play where they were attending a ceremonial gathering of people in a community where men would sit on chairs with their shoes on and be served whereas women would sit on the ground without shoes and do everything themselves.



After the role play the participants were asked to explain what they had seen, and the people who had shown the role play explained why they behaved as they did. This was then as a starting point for a more general discussion on intercultural learning. Elisa asked how exactly it is that we can ensure that voluntary projects are not only about seeing cultural diversity but about overcoming these differences. It was briefly summarised that it mainly has to do with good work camp leaders, sufficient preparation and good organising of practicalities and interaction in the work camp.

Active participation

The Aim of this session was to provide a common understanding of active participation and how to promote it using Voluntary Service with a focus on preparation. To achieve it we wanted to help the participants to understand the concept of Active participation (AP), to reflect on using voluntary service for promoting AP and to define the role of preparation in the process of AP.

In the first part of the activity we adapted one exercise from the book COMPASS, called "Take a step forward".

In the activity each participant receives a role card and they should reflect in silence about the role (where are you living? How is your daily life....). The participants stand up in a line and the facilitator starts to read some situations or events. Every time the participant can answer "yes" to the statement, they should take a step forward. Otherwise, they should stay where they are and not move.

Role cards:

- Young girl from Asia who understands but does not speak English;
- Girl student living with her family in a big European city;
- Boy student in a wheel chair from Europe;
- Boy student without arm from Eastern Europe;
- Single mother from Europe;
- Youth worker (boy) from Asia;
- Young boy from Africa with visa problem;
- Youth leader (girl) from small city from Latin America;
- Young roma student (boy) city living in a big European city;
- Young worker (girl) from Europe;

- Muslim girl student living in Europe;
- Young boy from Balkans who has to work to help his family;
- Young non-European immigrant boy living in Europe;
- Boy student living on his own in a country in Europe;
- Girl youth worker in European youth organisation;
- Active youth leader (boy) at local level from Latin America who has never travelled abroad;
- Young gay from Europe who had difficulty to be free to say/ live it.

Situations

- Participate in an international work camp;
- Participate in a long-term volunteer service;
- Active member of youth centre of your neighbourhood;
- Represent students at university;
- Travel alone outside of country;
- Participate in national activities and work camp leader on national level;
- Participate in study session in Budapest;
- To be the delegate of youth in Youth Council of your country;
- Create your own organisation;
- Professional experience outside your country;
- Go out with your friends on Saturday night;
- Live in your own flat and Feel free to fall in love;
- Go on vacation each year.

As some participants had the same profiles, it was interesting to see how each person perceived the character he/she received because of stereotypes, references, experiences...



The participants were then divided into groups, and asked to discuss what active participation is and come up with some keywords. The output included:

- Create projects/ chances/ opportunities;
- Do something without obligation, but with responsibility;
- Keep motivation despite poor conditions or difficulties;
- Get involved anywhere;
- Be prepared;
- Express our own individuality.

Before the end of the discussions in groups a paper with a description of *Roger Hart's Ladder of Young People's Participation* was handed out. The rungs on the ladder are:

- Rung 8: Young people and adults share decision-making;
- Rung 7: Young people lead and initiate action;
- Rung 6: Adult-initiated, shared decisions with young people;

- Rung 5: Young People consulted and informed;
- Rung 4: Young people assigned and informed;
- Rung 3: Young people tokenised;
- Rung 2: Young people are decoration;
- Rung 1: Young people are manipulated;

Finally the participants were asked how voluntary service could be used to promote active participation. The comments included:

- Preparation before work camps;
- Evaluation of outcomes of experiences before;
- Showing a personal benefit;
- Explaining the different roles and responsibilities of the individuals in a project;
- Seminars;
- Giving options/ choices to the volunteers in order to do something they feel good/comfortable at
- Motivating with the description of *Leisure Time Activities, Team Group and improvement of Language skills*.

Why and How

Preparation: Why?

The aim of the session was to get a common understanding of why we prepare volunteers for IVS projects.

While soft music was being played, the participants were asked to think back on their first VS experience, and what had happened before they left for the project (The first phone call to the organisation, the initial meeting in the office etc.). After some time they were asked to think about some specific topics:

- Did you feel that you needed preparation?
- Why or why not?
- After the project, did your opinion change? Why or why not?
- What preparation did you receive?

The participants were then given time to sum up their experiences, before meeting in groups for further discussion.

The participants met in four groups, and were given the task to agree on five reasons for preparing volunteers based on their own experience,. Once they had agreed, the four groups were merged into two who also had to agree on five reasons. Finally the two groups met and had to come up with five reasons which everyone could agree on. The five reasons were:

- Understanding of voluntary service
(To see the whole concept of voluntary service (aims, objectives, various kinds of VS, within the long-term perspective, explaining and clarifying the role of volunteers in their specific project.);
- Reduce fears, personal difficulties... and increase self-development;
- Active participation, continue participation, more participation;
- Facilitate intercultural learning;
- Prevent and manage conflicts and problems.

Preparation: How?

The session focussed on common approaches and methodologies suitable for the preparation of volunteers to address the five reasons for preparing volunteers which had been identified in the previous session.

Five groups were created, one for each of the reasons identified in the previous session, and the participants were asked to think about how the topic can be addressed when preparing volunteers. The participants were asked to keep the following in mind while discussing how to prepare:

1. What do the organisations do to address the needs for preparation (workshops, training, face to face, booklets, others)? Why?
2. How much human resources and time do they invest in the preparation of volunteers?
3. Do they cooperate with other partner/sister organisations?
4. Do they follow any guidelines or educational approach/philosophy?

The participants were asked to document the results as part of the preparation kit in the wiki and the proposed approaches include the following:

- Understanding of voluntary service;
Videos, session during preparation seminar, handbooks, meetings, talks with former participants,...
- Active participation, continue participation, more participation;
Database of former volunteers, network of volunteers, training seminars, internet based communication, cooperation internationally...
- Facilitate intercultural learning:
Introduction meetings to potential participants, longer meetings for confirmed participants.

Sharing methods and activities

The two previous sessions were used to discuss why preparation is needed and approaches and methodologies which can be used to address these reasons. Before starting to discuss new methods and activities for addressing the needs seen, one session was spent on sharing what has already been done in the organisations. Based on the previous session it was decided to split the group into smaller groups focussing on:

1. Media
2. Handbook
3. Individual discussions
4. Pre-departure events for participants
5. On-arrival events for participants
6. Presentations for potential participants

Before the study session all participants were asked to find out how preparation is done in their organisation, and to collect some educational material used. One participant was selected as a reporter for each group, the rest were asked to go around to all the groups where they could contribute, with the goal of getting the best possible overview of what is really done.

Each group, and especially the reporter for the group, was asked to document their results on the wiki in two different areas:

- Educational material: material used in the organisations as well as descriptions of what is done were placed here;
- Links and references: links to online material and references to other materials used by the organisations

Everyone was asked to include the name of the organisation which uses the material in the description, so people who are interested in using it know who to contact.

Designing educational activities

Before starting work on developing new activities or improving old ones, time was spent discussing how to design educational activities. The goal of the session was to get a common knowledge of how to design educational activities, so that all participants could take an active part in the following sessions.

First the facilitator explained what is meant by educational activities:

Educational activities are different types of actions which provide a framework and process for *learning* to take place. Through educational activities we may aim at transferring information and knowledge or at stimulating new attitudes and/or behaviours.

Learning is a conscious process; a cognitive process internal to the person undergoing the learning the goal of which is a kind of permanent change in the situation of the participant (new knowledge and/or new behaviour).

Cards with words describing elements which need to be considered when designing educational activities had been placed on a sticky wall. The participants were asked to put them in order based on what has to be considered first, as shown below:



Once agreement had been reached the participants were split in groups of four and, as an exercise, asked to go through the steps they had agreed on for an educational activity they selected themselves. To help them they were given a handout with the topics listed, as well as questions for each topic to help them understand what to focus on.

Open Space

The next one and a half days were used for an Open Space session where the goal was

- to improve existing methods and activities;
- develop new activities;
- create a preparation kit.

The persons who proposed a session during the open space were asked to make sure that the outcome of the session was documented as part of the preparation kit in the wiki.

After an introduction to Open Space the participants created the program and started working, with the prep-team being available if needed.



The sessions during the Open Space included:

- Preparing tutors for positive work camps (seminars for solving conflicts at WCs);
- Planning educational activities regarding gender issues;
- Methods in preparation & integration of handicapped people in voluntary projects;
- Preparing work camps for socially disadvantaged people;
- Integration of past participants in voluntary service process;
- Developing real life scenarios (case studies for preparation materials) - in order to provide concrete information on what to expect in a voluntary project;
- Preparation and facilitation of intercultural learning for participants;
- Plays and Games methods;
- Intercultural Learning and local communities.

The reports from each of the sessions as written by the participants can be found on the wiki as part of the preparation kit.

Presentation

After the end of the Open Space someone from each of the sessions that had taken place during the Open Space was asked to present the results of their work in no more than 90 seconds. The presentations had to:

1. include all the results the group obtained;
2. include a sum-up of the process that brought the group to these results (how did you get to these results?);
3. Every member of the group participates in the presentation;
4. The other members of the group have to gain a clear understanding of your group results;
5. There must be time for a Q&A session after the 90 seconds.

Videos of the presentations are available on the wiki (<http://sts2008.wetpaint.com/page/Presentations>).

Follow-up strategy

The aim of the session was to get people start planning on how they can use the results of the study session, personally, in their organisations and between organisations.

As part of the introduction the participants were asked to focus on the question:

“What actions do we need to take in order to use the results of the study session?”

They were given time to write down six possible follow-up actions. After that they were split into groups of 7 people and asked to agree on 7 follow-up actions they would like to share with the rest of the group taking into account the ideas of all the group members.

In plenary, the groups were tasked to share their 7 follow-up actions, by writing them on cards, putting them on the sticky wall, and giving a short explanation to the rest of the group. After all groups had presented their actions, they were divided into short, medium and long-term ideas, and according to whether the action was something to be done personally, organisationally or internationally.

Recommendations to the Alliance

Having discussed possible follow-up actions to use the outcome of the study session, the focus was changed to what the Alliance as a network should do to improve the preparation of volunteers.

The activity was organised following the cooperative advanced Democracy technique (www.dotmocracy.ca). The technique is a facilitation process for prioritising ideas among a large group of people. It is a participatory and equal opportunity large group decision-making process. It allows creating a large number of ideas and a common agreement in a relatively short amount of time. It can be used in different contexts and adapted to different uses.

The focus question for the session was the following:

Taking into consideration the results of the study session and our follow-up strategy, what do we want to recommend to the Alliance in order to improve the preparation of volunteers?

Each participant was given a democracy sheet, and they were asked to make a proposal each. Once the proposals were done they were put on the wall, and the participants could walk around and read the proposals, then vote on them and add comments. After everyone had had time to see all the proposals, they were collected by the facilitators. The proposals were then grouped by topics, and by number of votes.

The results of the voting were presented by the facilitators, and it was discussed in plenary. The outcome was a common agreement on what to recommend to the Alliance. These recommendations were presented to all Alliance members during the Alliance General Assembly.

Evaluation and closing

Reflection groups

During the entire session the participants were divided into reflection groups with one facilitator in each. Each group spent half an hour at the end of each day reflecting on what had taken place during the day. In addition to giving the participants a chance to reflect, the reflection groups were also used for daily evaluations, which provided feedback to the prep-team about the progress of the study session.

As the start of the evaluation of the study session the reflection groups met again, this time focussing on the evaluation of the study session.

Evaluation exercise

Two chairs were placed at either end of the room, the facilitator asked an evaluation question, and after each question the participants stood at the point between the two chairs which represented their opinion.

Closing exercise

As a closing exercise everyone wrote down one or more statements they wanted to share with the rest of the group on a paper flower. Once the statements were written down the flowers were folded up and put in trays with water, which caused the flower to open up. Then everyone could walk around and read the statements.

After the closing exercise the participants handed out the certificates to each other, and each participant was also given a DVD with all session plans and handouts from the study session, as well as other materials such as CCIVS publications, T-kits and they were also given a written evaluation.

Some of the things said/written during the evaluation were:

- will transfer knowledge to the colleagues and/or sending organisation;
- will promote the use of the wiki;
- will use new methodologies, methods and working materials they discovered during the study session;
- will set up preparation seminars (mainly for participants whose organisations has not developed preparation seminars yet);
- will include the results of the study session and the new knowledge during training for trainers, leaders and coordinators in the sending organisation.

The written evaluation asked the participants to rate different parts of the session on a scale from 1 to 5, with one being bad and five being good. The overall result was 4,4, and the average was 4 or more for all activities.

Main Outcomes of the study session

Wiki

The main outcome of the study session was the wiki, which includes both a good start on a kit for preparing volunteers, but also a collection of educational materials that can be used and links and references to other relevant materials. As all participants can contribute to the wiki, more information can be added after the study session, and when some of the methods and activities included are tried out, the results can easily be added. The fact that the wiki can be accessed by everyone online also means that it is easier to share the results of the study session with other people, both in your organisation and in the Alliance. In addition to this, other people who are interested in contributing to the wiki can easily be added.

Recommendations

Another outcome of the study session was a list of recommendations to the Alliance on how to improve the preparation of volunteers. The list of recommendations is included as an annex to this report, and includes both continuing work on the wiki, further trainings and study sessions, and ideas for new projects. The recommendations match the educational strategy of the Alliance well, and it seems likely that several of the proposals will be implemented.

Follow-up

The participants left the study session motivated to work on improving the way the preparation of volunteers is handled in their organisation, and with new ideas on how to improve the work already done. Several participants also emphasised that they will share the outcome of the study session with other people in their organisation.

Follow-up activities

Individual

Several participants left the study session with very concrete ideas on how they could use the outcome of the study session. In addition to this, a lot of people were motivated to be more active in their organisation, and some in the Alliance. Several people are involved in preparing volunteers, and during the study session they worked on concrete educational activities that can be used, so it seems very likely that these ideas will be tested, and implemented in their organisations.

Member organisations

The participants of the study session will share the results of the study session with other people in their organisation, and with the help of the wiki this means that the study session should have an effect both in their and other organisations. Some participants plan to introduce new activities to their organisations, such as preparation seminars, while other have concrete ideas for improving what has already been done.

Alliance

The recommendations to the Alliance based on the study session were presented by the course director to the Alliance at the General Assembly in March 2008. In addition to this a two-page written handout with the recommendations (included as an annex to this report) was handed out to all member organisations as well as partners and guests who took part in the Technical Meeting 2008. This means that lots of organisations have received both a link to the wiki as well as encouragement to contribute to the preparation kit.

The wiki and the preparation kit were also discussed with two working groups in the Alliance who have both been working with preparation of volunteers. The "Access for all working groups" has material which is used already, and this will be added to the wiki. The North/South working group has a list of methods used for preparing volunteers for North/South exchanges, and are also interested in using the wiki and share these methods with others.

Both a training for trainers and a training for work camp leaders are planned, and the recommendation by the participants of the study session will be included in their planning. The proposed study session matches the educational strategy of the Alliance well, and this idea will be included when considering future applications for study sessions.

Appendices

Final Programme

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	
8:00-9:00	Arrival	Breakfast							Departure
9:00-9.15		Introduction to the day and Energizer							
9:15-11:00		Group building	Intercultural learning and Voluntary service	Preparation: Why?	Sharing methods and activities	Open Space	Presentation of results		
11:00-11:30		Coffee							
11:30-13:00		Introduction: Alliance, CoE, EYCB	Continued	Preparation: How?	Designing educational activities	Open Space	Follow-up and strategy		
		Poster preparation							
13:00-14:30		Lunch							
14:30-16:00		Aims & Objectives Expectations Our role Outcome Motivation Fears	Continued	Free Afternoon	Open Space	Open Space	Recommendations to Alliance and member organisations		
			Active participation and Voluntary service						
16:00-16:30		Coffee			Coffee				
16:30-18:00		Why Voluntary service	Continued	Open Space	Open Space	Evaluation and closing			
18:00-18:30		Reflection groups			Reflection groups		Free time		
18:30-19:00		Free time			Free time				
19:00-20:00		Dinner			Dinner in Town	Dinner			
21:00-???	Welcome evening	Poster Cafe	Intercultural evening			Farewell Party			

List of participants names, organisations and countries

Participants

Name		Organisation	Country
Matti	Jamsa	Allianssi	Finland
Sini	Aalto	Allianssi	Finland
Olena	Koroliuk	Alternative-V	Ukraine
Iana	Omelchenko	Alternative-V	Ukraine
Delphine	Mondon	Concordia	France
Legrand	Johanna	Concordia	France/Ireland
Marie	Charpentier	Concordia	France
Omer	Kaya	GSM	Turkey
Serhan	Akcevin	GSM	Turkey
Aleksandr	Zakaryan	HUJ	Armenia
Yerem	Stepanyan	HUJ	Armenia
Anke	Thurm	IBG	Germany
Stefan	Eskerski	IBG	Germany
Nicole	Guenther	ICJA	Germany
Susanne	Ferger	ICJA	Germany
Florian	Fischer	ICYE	Germany
Zuzana	Dorcikova	INEX Sk	Slovakia
Natalia	Chardymova	SFERA	Russia
Olha	Hryschcuk	Union Forum	Ukraine
Sarka	Cihlarova	INEX SDA	Czech republic
Enes	Efovic	ADP-zid	Montenegro
Mirela	Rajkovic	ADP-zid	Montenegro
Helle	Gerber	MS	Denmark
Maria	Chalari	CVG	Greece
Kadri	Inselberg	EstYes	Estonia
Tomoko	Nakano	CIEE	Japan
Oscar	Miranda	VIVE Mexico	Mexico
Cecilia	Milesi	Subir al Sur	Argentina
Kim	Kwangyoul	IWO	Korea

Team

Name		Organisation	Country
Elisa	Chiodi	CCIVS	France
Dines	Justesen	MS	Denmark
Manuel	Zschintzsch	IBG	Germany
Myrto	Tsoukia	Elix	Greece

Educational Advisor: Laura de Witte
 Supervising Educational Advisor: Rui Gomes

Recommendations to the Alliance

Alliance Study session 2008: Participation through preparation

The study session 2008 took place from the 3rd to the 10th February 2008 in Budapest. The study session focused on how preparation of volunteers can be used to improve intercultural dialogue and active participation. Daily reports from the study session written by the participants are available from:

<http://sts2008.wetpaint.com/page/Report>.

In addition to this, an official report will be available from the Council of Europe website later.

The expected outcome of the study session was the following:

- A preparation kit;
- Plans for follow-up activities;
- Recommendations to the Alliance.

More information on each of these points is available below.

Preparation kit

During the study session a wiki² was created which includes:

- Information about the study session;
- Educational materials already used for preparing volunteers;
- Links to sites with relevant material;
- Preparation kit.

The preparation kit was started by the participants of the study session, and most of the content was developed during the study session, but new things are still added. The wiki is located at:

sts2008.wetpaint.com

Everyone is encouraged to contribute to the page, if you or anyone from your organization is interested, use the "Join this wiki" button on the page, and put the name of the organization and your role in the comments field when requesting to become a writer. If you have any questions contact Dines at dines@aub.dk.

Follow-up activities

Most of the time for planning follow-up activities was spent on individual activities, with each participant focussing on things they can do in their organization. The results of these discussions were shared, and time was given to talk about possible cooperation between organizations. More details about follow-up activities can be found on the wiki. When some of the methods discussed in the preparation kit are used, the goal is to have information about the results, which can be added to the wiki as part of the preparation kit.

Recommendations to the Alliance

The last part of the study session focussed on what could be done by the Alliance to improve the preparation of volunteers. In general, the participants of the study session found that preparation is an important topic, and that a discussion of common guidelines in the Alliance might be beneficial. Preparation seminars are seen as a good approach, and while practical aspects such as long distances might limit the possibilities, approaches such as organizing smaller activities at regional level might be helpful. A summary of each of the recommendations is included below.

² Wiki - A collaborative website where everyone can add, edit and link information.

Preparation kit

The work done during the study session was a good start on the preparation kit that can be used by anyone involved in the preparation of volunteers. Other people who are involved in the preparation of volunteers are encouraged to join the wiki, so they can contribute to what is there. We would therefore appreciate if the link to the wiki was sent to anyone in your organization who is involved in the preparation of volunteers. This could also be a good chance to add information on new topics, such as special issues to consider for target groups like the socially disadvantaged, or for North/South exchanges.

Training for trainers of preparation seminars

The study session was a good start to try to improve the preparation we do in the organizations, but an important next step is to give the trainers carrying out the preparation and on-arrival seminars a chance to cooperate and a place to exchange methods that can be used. In the same way as the previous training for trainers helped the people doing camp leaders' training share methods and get inspired from each other, this could help the people doing preparation seminars improve their work. A possible output of this would also be to include more detailed information about methods in the preparation kit on the wiki.

E-learning

In some cases seminars are not a practical way to prepare volunteers, and other options have to be considered. A suggested way of doing this is to use e-learning. While this could be done by individual organizations, cooperating on a common platform might ease the process. More detailed information about the proposal can be found at:

<http://sts2008.wetpaint.com/page/E-+Learning+Preparation+of+Volunteers>

Other educational activities

In addition to the above, the following recommendations, which are linked to other activities in the Alliance, were also agreed on.

- A study session on how to use activities after a work camp (such as evaluation meetings) to encourage active participation, and to improve intercultural learning;
- A camp leaders' training which focuses on what camp leaders can do to improve intercultural learning and increase focus on global education;
- Trainings on specific topics such as health & safety, fundraising & financing.

Most of these proposal match the activities listed in the training priorities, and should thus be considered when planning these activities.

Future study session

In addition to this, ideas for improving the information provided to participants before a study session was discussed, and it will be included with the evaluation from the prep-team when planning future study sessions.

