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Interreg Volunteer Youth (IVY)



Guidelines for IVY Host Organisations

Dear IVY Host Organisation,

We are very glad to welcome you on board of the Interreg Volunteer Youth (IVY) initiative.

With this document, we at the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) would like to provide you with more information on IVY so to guarantee a positive experience for you and the volunteer(s) you will host, as well as to enable a smooth and rich cooperation with you.

The present document is organised according to the chronological development of the process of hosting a volunteer. It starts with some general, background information on the initiative and endeavours to guide you through the procedure, from the application to participation in the selection process, leading to the volunteer you will host. This document also gives some indications on the role of the mentor and some directions on what it means to host a volunteer in practice.

We hope to have included all aspects and that this document is as comprehensive as possible, both for Interreg Programmes and Projects. Yet, should you have further doubts on the procedure or while hosting a volunteer, please contact us at ivy@aebr.eu.

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I. What is IVY and our mission

Background information

[Interreg Volunteer Youth](#) (IVY) is part of the broader [European Solidarity Corps Initiative](#) launched by the European Commission and announced by President Juncker in his State of the Union Speech in front of the European Parliament on the 14th of September 2016. The **Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy** (DG REGIO) has decided to answer the European Commission's call in launching IVY as its contribution to foster solidarity and provide Interreg Programmes & Projects with valuable support. The **Association of European Border Regions (AEBR)** manages IVY and is the contact point for both host organisations and volunteers.

IVY began on **March 1st, 2017** as a one year pilot initiative and has been further extended. The IVY grant agreement was officially signed in Brussels on the 15th of March, 2017 between

Martin Guillermo Ramirez, AEBR Secretary General, and Lena Andersson Pench, Director of European Territorial Cooperation at the European Commission's Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO).

IVY is co-funded by the European Commission's DG REGIO using the European Regional and Development Fund (ERDF).

What is IVY about

IVY offers the possibility to young Europeans aged 18-30 to serve as **volunteers** in cross-border, transnational or interregional programmes and related projects. Each experience is between 2 and 6 months long.

Interreg Managing Authorities and/or Joint Secretariats can host Interreg Reporters who help disseminate information on the benefits of territorial integration. Reporter volunteers bring an informal and creative approach to supporting communication process.

Interreg Project beneficiaries can host Interreg Project Partners to help implement the project's goal and illustrate solidarity among Interreg initiatives.

AEBR manages the entire procedure. We find volunteers for your organisation, arrange legal/administrative issues and cover the volunteers' insurance while they are engaged in your organisation. AEBR also prepares the contract and provides volunteers with financial support they will need during their experience. Finally, AEBR ensures that both host organisations and volunteers are satisfied with the IVY experience. This is why we monitor all participants on a regular basis and report weekly to DG REGIO.

With the support structure we provide, host organisations have few obligations. They cooperate with us during the selection process, help volunteers deal with local administrative requirements, assist in finding accommodations and help assimilate volunteers into the team.

Objectives

The IVY initiative is aimed at engaging young volunteers to **support, promote and report** the achievements of Interreg programmes and projects, as well as promoting **cooperation across European borders** and fostering related values such as solidarity. IVY gives volunteers the opportunity to familiarise themselves with Interreg and illustrates the many benefits of collaboration among EU internal borders. In this light, the main objective of IVY is to **contribute to the visibility of Interreg projects** by involving young and engaged Europeans. Through IVY, we want to draw young people into the field of territorial cooperation because we believe that Interreg should be an integral aspect of policy making in the European Union.

In order to involve young people in Interreg Programmes and Projects, the "Interreg Volunteer Youth" initiative has adopted a volunteer format. This model not only facilitates an easier integration of young people into your organisation, but it permits a more informal approach to communication and to the implementation of your work. We believe that the external perspective of volunteers can advantage your organisation in providing a **new point of view**, one which is closer to the general public than to the "institutions" – and we think that such an

approach might showcase the achievements of your Interreg projects in a more effective way to the local population and to all European citizens.

II. How to host IVY volunteers

To host a volunteer with IVY is quick and easy: the application process entails just one document - two for Interreg Project beneficiaries -, a call with the candidates you decide to be put in touch with and the signature of the final agreement. AEBR takes care of all the organisational and administrative arrangements.

All processes can be completed online and documents can be submitted via email to ivy@aebr.eu

Please note that you can host **more than one volunteer**. You can host them simultaneously or one volunteer after the other, or so that during one period their stay overlaps and they can help each other in the transition phase.

How to apply

-**Managing Authorities** and **Joint Secretariats** only have to fill in one document. With it you can express your preferences in terms of the profile of the volunteer you would like to host. This document also states the rules underlying an experience in the framework of IVY. The document is called "**Programme Note**" and it can be downloaded from our website under this link: <https://www.interregyouth.com/hostorganisations>

-**Project beneficiaries** have to complete a document to indicate preferences as for the profile of the volunteer you would like to host. The document also defines the rules envisaged by IVY; this is the "**Project Note**". Project beneficiaries willing to host a volunteer also have to submit a document to be issued by the Managing Authority or the Joint Secretariat of the Interreg Programme they belong to (the "**Letter of Approval**"). This document is essential for AEBR to have an official proof that the organisation applying to host an IVY volunteer is indeed an Interreg project beneficiary. Both the "Project Note" and the template of the "Letter of Approval" can be easily downloaded from our website: <https://www.interregyouth.com/hostorganisations>

Notice that both project leaders and project partners are eligible to host IVY volunteers.

Tips on how to complete the documents

Please note that the Programme and the Project Note can be signed by the person within the organisation who will be responsible for the volunteer. The approval from the Managing Authority or the Joint Secretariat can be signed by the person of the Interreg Programme with whom your organisation is in touch with (this person can be the communication officer or the officer you are mostly in touch with and who follows and best knows your project).

The Programme and the Project Note are useful to us to **understand** what your organisation is working on and which kind of **profile** would best suit your expectations. The information you give us will be our criteria when looking for your volunteer. Therefore, if you host more than one volunteer and the tasks assigned to them are the same, then it is enough if you fill in one single Note – in this case, please specify the number of volunteers you would like to

host for those tasks. However, if you are willing to host multiple volunteers, each responsible for different tasks, we will need separate Notes for each volunteer's profile.

The notes are organised as follows:

- Letters A and B help us understand **your organisation's profile** and what your Interreg programme or project is about;
- Letters D, E and F help delineate the **profile of the volunteer** regarding languages and skills you require;
- Letters J to L offer **guidelines** and **rules** to respect with regards to hosting a volunteer. Moreover, they give some **suggestions** on how to support the volunteer during his/her stay at your organisation.

It is sufficient for us to receive the documents in electronic form, there is no need to send them via traditional mail. Yet, should you need the documents in original, please let us know.

Fundamental principles of IVY

Relevant aspects to consider while completing the Programme/Project Note are:

-the **solidarity scope/dimension** of being involved in IVY:

IVY is part of the European Solidarity Corps, and as such it aims at promoting solidarity actions. In this light, the activities that the volunteer will carry out while volunteering for your project must entail a dimension of solidarity. At the last point of **letter F** we ask you to highlight this aspect. Therefore, please specify here the cooperative and supportive dimension of the volunteer's activities – especially considering that Interreg is by definition about cooperation and support, hence solidarity.

-the nature of IVY as being about **volunteering**:

IVY offers volunteering experiences, which means that the relationship between the host organisation and the volunteer is based on mutual learning and reciprocal giving. All parties involved profit from the experience: the volunteers bring an added value to the host organisation by contributing with specific skills and specific experiences which can help the host organisation better reach its goal; the volunteers gain an empowering experience through giving and through the learning experience. With respect to this aspect, **administrative, logistic and in general job-substitution tasks are not allowed**. On the contrary, we expect the volunteers to be granted some **freedom and flexibility** with regard to the way they can communicate and operate. We encourage them to **"think out of the box"**, to communicate in a more informal way and to be proactive during their stay in your organisation. Please remember that the young person you agree to host is a volunteer and not an intern nor a trainee. Hence, make sure to always address the IVY volunteer as a "volunteer" and not as "trainee/intern".

-the adherence to the **principles of the European Solidarity Corps Chart**:

In the Programme/Project Note we address the Chart of the European Solidarity Corps which lists **duties and rights of the parties involved** in the experience – it is an ethic basis for all the activities under the European Solidarity Corps. Since IVY is part of it, AEBR as coordinator adopted the Chart and this should serve as **guideline for the host organisations** too. Therefore, it is very important that you read the Chart and adhere to it when applying to host

a volunteer in the framework of IVY. Should you have questions on the content, please let us know.

Should there be any doubts about how to respond to a point in the Project/Programme Note, we are at your full disposal and we are happy to help you at any step.

It is highly recommended that you send a draft Programme/Project Note before signing it so that we can check it and provide you with a feedback should there be inaccuracies.

Once you send us the final **Programme/Project Note completed and signed**, the cooperation between your organisation and AEBR is official and we will start looking for your volunteers. Also, at this point we will add your name to the list of **IVY's host organisations** on our website, to give our partnership clear visibility. To do so, we ask you to send us the **logo of your organisation** and/or of your Interreg project (jpeg format only) to be uploaded on our website: <https://www.interregyouth.com/programme> & <https://www.interregyouth.com/projects>

III. The selection process

At this point we look for young people's profiles that best match what's written in your Note (we call this the "standard procedure"). We then present you a selection of candidates. Yet, should you already know someone whom you would like to host as a volunteer (maybe you really liked working with a previous intern, or someone applied for an opportunity at your organisation but you are not able to welcome them for internal reasons) let us know and put us in touch with this person: we will arrange the volunteering experience with the **person of your choice** directly.

You are also more than welcome to sponsor your volunteering offer(s) within your network by adding an item on your website and/or via your social media account so to attract spontaneous candidates too. If you do so, please let us know so that we can share the "news" on our platform and increase the visibility of your offer(s).

AEBR pre-screens the candidates

As per the "standard procedure", we look for your candidates in the European Solidarity Corps portal. Currently, around 48,000 people are registered to this portal and have expressed willingness to volunteer for a project which embraces the scope of the European Union and supports its values of cooperation, unity and solidarity. AEBR, as an accredited organisation, utilises the portal to screen basic information registered by the candidates. This includes personal data, education and employment experience, language skills, availability and a statement of motivation. When searching for candidates for you, we adopt as criteria for the selection the **information** you gave us **in the Programme/Project Note**, which we match with the information **shared by the candidates on the portal**.

We then **forward you some profiles** (about 6) of the candidates we believe correspond best to your needs and let you decide whether you want to get in touch with all of the suggested candidates or just with some of them. Please note that experience has shown that the greater the number of people we contact in this very first phase, the quicker is the chance to arrange a rapid, smooth and successful match between the final volunteer and the host organisation.

As soon as you let us know whom you wish to contact, we send a **contact request via the European Solidarity Corps portal**. Indeed, unless the candidates included in your selection are spontaneous ones (meaning we have their email addresses because they have contacted us to apply for your offer), please be aware that for privacy reasons we do not have access to the candidates' contact details and we can only contact them via the portal. The moment they accept our contact request, we immediately share with them some general information about IVY and about your organisation and we put them **in touch with you** via email.

You lead the interview

At this stage, you will be directly in contact with the candidates: you can provide them more **detailed information** about what your role in Interreg is and about what you expect the volunteer to contribute with, and you can arrange an informal interview with them directly.

The interview is meant to be a moment in which you and the candidate can **get to know each other** better and can **exchange on mutual expectations**. It is intended to be **informal** and focused on **assessing the motivation, interest and the competences of the candidate** in relation to the scope of the project. We understand you might need specific skills from the volunteer, but please avoid formal setting. As proof of competency, you may ask candidates to submit examples of their work. Please do not see the interview as a test for the volunteer and avoid putting the person under pressure: IVY is about volunteering and the procedure should not resemble a job interview. Rather, the relationship between the host organisation and the volunteer should be based on trust, commitment, mutual respect and cooperation.

Identification of the right volunteer

Once you have identified the person you would like to host as IVY volunteer, you can communicate it directly to the person and let us know about your choice. As soon as the candidate accepts, the match is considered as done: you can arrange the details of the period during which the candidate will volunteer.

Please agree on an **exact start and end date** between a **minimum of 2 months and a maximum of 6 months**. Once you have decided on the dates, **we prepare the documents** for the volunteer: **the so-called "IVY Agreement" and the insurance**, which we send to him/her together with some **information** (as general information about the European Union and Interreg and **guidelines and tips**) which will be useful to the volunteer during his/her experience.

IV. Preparing the volunteer

Besides administrative aspects, AEBR takes care of the financial support for the volunteers.

The financial support

We grant all volunteers a **daily allowance** which varies depending on the costs of living of the country where the volunteers is deployed (the amount ranges between a minimum of 19 EUR to a maximum of 26 EUR per day) for the entire duration of their placement. This daily

allowance is intended to help the volunteer cover lodging, food, local transport, etc., as well as to provide some pocket money. Moreover, we **contribute to the travel costs** by giving a fixed amount of money which is based on the number of km between the volunteer's residence and the location of the host organisation.

AEBR transfers the money directly to the volunteers in two or three instalments, depending on the length of the stay.

You can see the tables displaying how much money is granted for the daily support in the country in which your organisation is based and for the volunteer's travel on our website: <https://www.interregyouth.com/fagvolunteers>

Host organisations are welcomed to top-up AEBR's financial support to the volunteers if they wish to do so. Yet, please notice that **the money that the volunteers receive from AEBR comes from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)**. Hence, if you wish to give an extra support to the volunteer, this cannot be risen from ERDF funding (Interreg) as **double use of the same EU source for the same purpose must be avoided**. Therefore, although very much appreciated, you can **top up** the financial support only by **using your own resources** or other sources which are **independent from EU funding**.

The insurance for the volunteers

The insurance that AEBR arranges for the volunteers covers **health, general assistance, liability and accident**. The volunteers will be covered for the whole duration of the period indicated in the IVY Agreement.

Please note that we are not able to apply the insurance scheme we normally offer in the event you host a volunteer who is already insured in the country you are based. The scope of our insurance coverage is limited to countries other than the candidate's nation of residence as to not conflict with pre-existing policies. Yet, under IVY it is possible to host a volunteer who is resident in the same country where the host organisation is based, so should you have identified a person who is resident in the same country as you are, it is by no means a problem: we will look into other options, and we do so by getting in touch with someone who is responsible for legal and administrative issues within your institution. Should an internal solution not be possible, we will contact private local insurance providers to make sure that the volunteer is covered **prior to his/her start**.

Providing relevant information

Once that administrative and financial issues are taken care of, we at AEBR deepen the contact with the volunteers and have an **extensive Skype call** with them. The main aim of this call is **to get to know each other** and make sure that the volunteers have **no doubts left** with regard to their engagement in your organisation. The call is also the occasion to clarify the role of the many actors involved in IVY (for example AEBR's role), but also to illustrate once more what Interreg is. We advise about their role in your organisation and how they can enhance the solidarity dimension of territorial cooperation. We exchange general information and emphasise that volunteering is based on mutual commitment, flexibility and a proactive attitude.

Only AEBR staff and departing volunteers attend this call.

Preparing to host a volunteer

In this phase, the host organisation's involvement is minimum as **AEBR is taking care of the organisational and administrative issues** together with the volunteer.

Host organisations at this point should be in touch with the volunteer to **help him/her find an accommodation** in case the volunteer needs support **and prepare internal administrative documents** if needed.

In addition to getting the volunteer settled in, a representative of the host organisation must **sign the contract** once the volunteer has completed it. Please send the agreement to us afterwards so that we can finalise it by adding our signature, too.

Equally to the Programme/Project Note, we only need a scanned copy of the signature page of the IVY Agreement. If you need the original copy via post, please let us know.

V. Hosting the Volunteer

To host a volunteer means to engage in a relationship in which all the parties involved profit from the upcoming experience: the volunteers contribute by bringing specific skills and experiences which can **help the host organisation** better reach its goal; the volunteers gain an **empowering experience** through giving, but also through the learning experience. This relationship is based on **commitment** and **flexibility** at the same time, and therefore we expect both parties to respect these two elements. According to these principles, we allow you and the volunteer to decide how to best outline responsibilities. AEBR encourages you to adopt a flexible schedule and bear in mind that the nature of the relationship is voluntary; differing from a traditional internship experience.

Working with a volunteer carries with it the benefit of having a person with a fresh perspective in your organisation. This is a unique opportunity to gain an external point of view, but one which also requires some guidance at the beginning.

The role as mentor

The mentor is expected to **help the volunteer familiarise** with the environment of the organisation and, most of all, with the Interreg bonds of your organisation. The mentor will be the **main contact person** for the volunteer, the one who will give him/her the tasks, but also the one the volunteer should discuss with in case any doubts or difficulties should rise. The volunteer and the mentor should **consult on the work** the volunteer is expected to carry on during the stay, and the volunteer should **agree with** the mentor **on activities** he/she is going to suggest outside of the given tasks.

We recommend to arrange a moment to **exchange with the volunteer on a regular basis** and to carry it on repeatedly, so to ensure a strong and fruitful cooperation with him/her.

The volunteer's task

We encourage our volunteers to take full advantage of their IVY experience and go beyond the assignments requested by the host organisation. We invite them to **be proactive**, to bring their **own ideas** in your organisation and **engage** as much as possible with the environment outside the host organisation as well, for example with the local population, with stakeholders and media, so to increase the visibility of your local impact and to expand your possibilities.

We encourage the volunteers to **meet the beneficiaries of the Interreg projects** in which they are involved. The volunteers are indeed advised to reach out to the projects partners which are involved in the Interreg Programme covering the area in which they are deployed, or other associations or institutes working on the same Interreg project. For this kind of **visits and travels of the volunteer, you can use Interreg resources (hence ERDF funding) to cover the related expenses** as this would not interfere with the financial support AEBR grants to the volunteer. It would thus not result in a double financing as it corresponds to another objective: it is not a personal support to the volunteer but an expenditure in the framework of the implementation and/or promotion of your Interreg programme or project.

We also involve the volunteers in activities to which AEBR is invited within the scope of the "Interreg Volunteer Youth" initiative, such as interviews and events. We believe that to **include the volunteers** in these **outreach events** is a great asset for them. At the same time, it benefits AEBR because volunteers can share their first-hand experiences and promote the success of the programme. This is also good publicity for host organisations and provides for greater visibility among potential candidates as well as influential attendees. Yet, when inviting them, we ask the volunteers to discuss about this possibility with the mentor, who has to agree beforehand.

Finally, in order to promote IVY, we also **involve the volunteer** in the initiative itself so to bring together the experiences of all the volunteers and host organisations and **create** thus a solid, common pool of "**Interreg stories**". To do so, we collect the volunteers' experiences by asking them to send us pictures of their volunteering environment, to write blog posts in which they report about their involvement in the Interreg Programme or Project they volunteer for and to produce a video with the mentor in which they can present a sketch of how your IVY experience is going and why you decided to become an IVY host organisation.

In light of this **extra tasks** we ask to the volunteers, we would like you to take this aspect into consideration when formulating the workload for the volunteer.

The aim of these efforts is to strengthen the visibility of initiatives which fall into the field of European territorial cooperation and thus to raise knowledge about it. We believe that by collecting the different experiences of our IVY volunteers and presenting them through one channel which addresses a new public, Interreg and the partners involved in its structures earn a stronger image across a wider public.

Monitoring and credential of the experience

AEBR takes care of **monitoring the stay of the volunteer during IVY**. In addition to the preparatory call, we stay regularly in touch with them as well as with the host organisations to make sure they feel well throughout their stay. We also ask the volunteer and the mentor to **fill in a survey** so to assess the overall IVY experience.

At the end of the stay of every volunteer, we will send the volunteer and the host organisation a **certificate of participation** to praise their commitment.

For any additional question on your role as IVY host organisation, please rely on the following “FAQs” webpage: <https://www.interregyouth.com/faghostorganisations>

We look forward to starting an exciting experience with you and to establishing a fruitful cooperation. We remain at your disposal should you have further questions on the procedure and we take this occasion to thank you once more for participating in the “Interreg Volunteer Youth” initiative!

IVY team