

Preliminary comment: VIA e.V. has a mission statement which is being communicated verbally as well as in writing and which has been published on the organization's website. Since the following remarks deal with another topic, a new term is being used in order to avoid confusion.

Self-conception

Statements on the importance of volunteer placements for the organization

Purpose of the association VIA e.V., as further described in the statute, is the promotion of international exchange and intercultural understanding. Therefore, volunteer placements are an essential component of the work of VIA e.V. They are a core element to achieve the association's goals. VIA e.V. sees the volunteer placements as learning placements that are educationally supported.

The volunteer placements and the intensive cooperation with partner organizations and individuals in the host countries, both in so called industrial countries and in countries of the global south, help to strengthen the intercultural exchange on a sustainable basis.

The regular exchange of information as well as permanent dialogue between us and our partners in the host countries make it possible to change perspective and to reconsider possible stereotypes and prejudices. In this respect, the volunteer placements greatly enrich the association's work.

Volunteer placements give greater prominence to the association of VIA e.V. and therefore contribute to make the association and its goals available to a wider public.

After their return from the host countries, the volunteers are given various opportunities to continue their commitment and share their experiences made during the placement. By means of their various ideas and activities, the volunteers also contribute to the further development of the association.

Statements on the goals of the voluntary activities

The goal of the volunteers' activities is to support the partner organizations in the host countries in their work. Volunteers may undertake tasks for which the full-time staff does not have enough time. They bring in new perspectives and exchange views on lifestyle habits, cultural peculiarities, language as well as different values and ideas with other people. In

doing so, they help to improve the understanding between peoples and to enhance mutual respect and tolerance. Beyond that, they provide information and knowledge regarding the political and social reality of their home country.

The volunteers support other people and help to promote and strengthen the idea of a voluntary commitment also within the countries of the global south.

The volunteers' commitment and the intense exchange connected with it also mean that the partner organization's concerns and interests are being perceived beyond national and continental borders. They see the volunteers as multipliers and have a great interest in an extended exchange in which young people from the host countries have the opportunity to do a volunteer placement in Germany.

Statements on objectives concerning the volunteers

Volunteer placements are learning placements. They offer young adults the possibility to make new experiences, reflect on them and consequently broaden their horizons. Learning is primarily focused on intercultural and personal development processes and pursues various objectives: counteracting stereotypes and racism, promoting tolerance and mutual respect and creating understanding for a peaceful coexistence in a globalized world.

The volunteer placement helps the volunteers to recognize, question and understand global connections, dependences and interactions and to reflect on their own actions, both in the host and the home country. VIA e.V. encourages the volunteers to act responsibly on a local and global level. After their return to Germany, VIA e.V. helps the volunteers to remain interested in global issues and active at VIA e.V. or in other organizations, sharing their experiences and encounters with other people and spreading the idea of a better world by joint activities. Their role as multipliers is of central importance.

Through intense educational support, VIA e.V. also contributes to the further development of the volunteers' skills. The focus here is on cooperation and intercultural communication skills, on the identification and resolution of conflicts and the ability to reflect on one's own behavior. Many volunteers gain inspiration for a professional (re-) orientation.

Self-competence

- enhancement of the self-image, comparison with public images (formation of identity)
- identify personal strengths and weaknesses
- learn to know and express own needs
- stress management
- motivation to learn
- self-efficacy
- develop and reconsider attitudes and values

Social skills

- cooperation skills
- communication skills, also interculturally
- ability to handle conflicts, also interculturally
- empathy
- change of perspective

Methodological competence

- language(s)
- specific professional competencies
- regional knowledge
- knowledge of global interconnections
- apply constructive conflict resolutions
- manage learning processes by oneself
- project management

The fact that the volunteers reflect on the consequences of their activities both in the foreign country and at home is very important to us. We promote the volunteers' awareness for global interactions and problems like poverty, social inequality, exclusion, resource consumption and global environmental change. At the same time, the participants are encouraged to contribute to the enhancement of awareness within society by sharing their experiences, encounters and acquired knowledge with others. We invite the volunteers to continue dealing with global questions and to remain active with us or in other organizations after their return.

VIA e.V. ensures that statements regarding the importance of the volunteer placements are being communicated to the partner organizations and their placement locations. Within the framework of an intense dialogue, we exchange our goals, ideas and values. The results of this dialogue are documented in the written agreements.

The self-conception described above (as well as the mission statement and the statute) is accessible to all participants (partner organizations, interested parties) in the necessary languages (French, English, Spanish). It is available on our organization's website (www.via-ev.org) as well as on the social networks (facebook). Upon request, it will also be sent by email.