



International
Campaign
for Sustainability
in Voluntary Service

Handbook of recommendations: How to make environmental sustainability part of your workcamps and events



The Environmental Sustainability Working Group of the Alliance

Dear partners,

this document is part of a toolkit elaborated in 2013 by the **Environmental Sustainability Working Group (ESWG)** of the Alliance. The ESWG was created in 2012 with the aim of promoting the principles of the Sustainability Campaign carried out by the Alliance as well as to support the associations in the enhancement of environmental sustainability in workcamps and in their activities.

The ESWG consists of employees or volunteers from several member organizations who are willing to put extra effort in promoting sustainable practices in the Alliance, the number of group members and their national organizations involved vary year to year.

The organizations of the ESWG share, with all the Alliance associations, the will to transform our communities. They strive for **a fairer world, one that is more sustainable, healthier and with more balanced resources and social justice** that will lead toward the development of people, communities, their happiness, and solidarity. This is the main mission that all voluntary service organizations have.

We would like to thank you for your effort to organize this Alliance project! To help the ESWG to reach the objectives of the sustainability campaign, we ask you to adopt some recommendations on how to organise our voluntary projects in an environmentally sustainable way that we suggest in this handbook.

We want to spread and enhance these good practices to help building a better world!

Introduction

Workcamps and voluntary projects have always been an occasion of cultural, social and linguistic exchange; a way to enhance cooperation and peace between different cultures and people. Furthermore, they may improve participation in social life as well as to suggest alternative models of economic, environmental, and civil development. In addition, work camps or any other voluntary project of active civil participation may suggest values for an environmentally friendly attitude: the centrality of the relationship between people and environment; social equity, cooperation solidarity and environmental sustainability. As matter of fact, environmental sustainability can create economic value by reducing costs as well as social value by improving the quality of our life.

In this context, workcamps may be conceived as a chance to raise awareness of sustainable good practices in all the parties involved in our projects: volunteers, local communities and administrative councils. They may also help improving a conscious relationship between people and communities as well as between communities and the surrounding environment. Moreover, we may be able to show how to obtain concrete results paying attention to little things in our everyday life in order to finally achieve a real change. This philosophy may be the starting point towards a fair and more sustainable world for the coming generations.

Workcamps can play an important role to reach some of the over mentioned strategic objectives that should be part of the mission of all our organizations: raising awareness in local authorities and communities of sustainable ways of living; promoting and defending the cultural and environmental quality of our territories; enhancing biodiversity and natural landscapes; fighting environmental abuses while spreading values of legality as necessary condition to social and economic development.

In this handbook you will find useful recommendations for camp leaders and work camp participants and organizers of the camps such as voluntary organizations, project/local partners (marked in [blue](#)).

Water

- **Drink tap water!** You can save on bottles' packaging, transport and plastic production. Moreover, tap water is cheaper and often safer since analyses are regularly conducted every year.
- **Take a shower rather than a bath.** During workcamps, propose to each volunteer to take no more than a shower per day.
- **Wash dishes using two washbasins** (one for washing, one for rinsing). Letting water run continuously wastes more water than a dishwasher! Also, this system can be a good way to have each participant wash up after themselves - "auto-wash" ;)
- **Use the dishwasher or the washing machine only with full loads** and choose the energy-saving programs.
- **Turn off the tap when you brush your teeth or shave.** Pay attention to water flow in general.
- Use the same water for different purposes: for instance, you can use the water you boiled to irrigate flowers and plants!
- Organize a way keep drinking water cool. Too often people let water run a minute before they pour it in a glass, so that it would be colder. You can prevent this from happening.
- Install a toilet flush with double buttons so it uses the right amount of water.
- If you have the opportunity, consider installing dry toilets. They save a lot of water plus the faeces can be turned into nutrition for the garden.
- Replace the gaskets on leaky taps and install pressure regulators. You can save up to 40% of water!

Some data:

1. For instance, 350000 million tons of polyethylene, 665000 tons of oil and 910000 tons of CO₂ emissions are needed to bottle 12 billion litres of water!
2. A shower uses 25-50 litres while a bath requires 150-200 litres.
3. A family can economize between 8000 and 11000 litres per year this way.
4. An average of ten litres of water runs through a tap every minute!
5. 30% of the whole water supply is used for the toilet.
6. A tap leaking 30 gutters per minute wastes 200 litres every month and 2400 litres every year!

Electricity

- **Switch the lights off when you don't need them.**
- **During daytime, open windows and shutters.** Natural light is always preferable.
- **Turn the stand-by dispositive off.**
- **Use the washing machine and the dishwasher fully loaded.** Try to activate it during the night. Choose the proper energy-saving program and low temperature. Remember that the half-load program does not imply half-energy consumption. You can save 45 kg of CO₂ per year!
- Clean up regularly fridge and freezer. Regulate the temperature according to the different seasons. Open them only if necessary and close them as soon as you can. Place them in the coolest point of the kitchen. Do not keep them next to the cooker or the oven.
- Install automatic independent Switches.
- Paint the walls white or with light colours. You can save on light bulbs!
- Replace the traditional incandescent light bulbs with fluorescent lamps.
- When buying new electronic household appliances choose class A or higher. Choose the ones with power-save interrupter.
- Replace the electric boiler with a gas water heater. Remember: heating is the most responsible for CO₂ emissions!
- Install a condensing boiler.

Some data:

1. For instance, a TV turned on uses 130Kwh per year while 105 Kwh are used for a TV in stand-by. You can save 80 kg of CO₂ per year!
2. A shower uses 25-50 litres while a bath requires 150-200 litres.
3. Fluorescent lamps are five times more energy-efficient, with a lifetime of between 6000 and 15000 hours versus 1000 hours for a traditional light bulb. Moreover, a fluorescent light bulb discharges 80% less CO₂ into the atmosphere.
4. If you deactivate the electronic heating during the night, you can save 2135Kg of CO₂.

Eating

- **Buy local seasonal products, unpacked or with reduced and recyclable packaging!**
- **Buy fair trade products** (coffee, cocoa, tea and brown sugar...). It helps producers in developing countries achieve better trading conditions and to promote sustainable farming.
- **Opt for a farmer's market if you can.**
- **Choose organic products.**
- **Limit the consumption of meat.** Turn to a diet based on vegetables, cereals and fruits. You can cut emissions linked to breeding and transport of animals.
- **Cover the pot with a lid.** The water would boil faster to avoid electricity loss. Do not add salt when water is not boiling yet since it increases the boiling point.
- Use a pressure pot to cook products that need longer cooking.
- **Take part in a Community Supported Agriculture group that buys local products directly from the producer.**

Some data:

1. For instance, a kilo of meat absorbs the same amount of energy as lighting a 100W light bulb for three weeks!
2. According to recent research, a man consumes on average 644 kg of fresh products, which implies 1230 kg of CO2 emissions per year. Turning to bio agriculture you can cut CO2 emissions by 30%.
3. A kg of cherries flying from Argentina for 12000 km implies 16,82 of CO2 emissions versus 0.28 kg of CO2 emitted by a kg of cherries locally produced and transported within 100Km.

Cleaning

- **Choose environmentally friendly products** (Eco-label).
- Limit the consumption of detergents and do not use them for a different purpose than the one suggested on the labels.
- You can try to make your own cleaning products using natural ingredients such as vinegar, baking soda...

Heating

- Regulate the heating of each room according to your need. Turn the radiators off when you are out.
- Shut the windows and the shutters during the night to minimize loss of heat.
- Do not leave clothes on the radiators.
- Regularly check the safety and the efficiency of your heating system.
- Install thermostatic radiator valves to properly regulate the temperature.
- Insulate doors and windows.
- Install double glass windows, rubber gaskets or silicon to avoid heat loss.
- Install a ventilating and air-conditioning system with reversible air flow.

Waste management & recycling

Another important point is waste production and management by volunteers and camp leaders. The aim in terms of sustainability is to limit the production of waste as much as possible.

- If you have the possibility **buy unpackaged food in bulk**. If not, choose products with **easily recyclable packaging**.
- **Do not use single use disposables such as plastic cups, plates or cutlery**. Washing dishes is a very small effort compared to what it takes to make all these products which are then thrown away and can end up in the oceans.
- When you have a choice, **opt for products made from recycled materials** (paper, toilet paper...)
- **Separate organic waste and compost it**. If local partners do not compost yet, propose it to them! It is very easy and beneficial in so many ways - you reduce your landfill waste (where organic waste cannot properly decompose because of lack of air) and you get nutritious humus for your plants 😊
- **Separate recyclables**. For more information, contact the retailer or the local authorities in charge of waste management. Recycling products are mainly plastics, aluminium cans, glasses and paper. But remember that better than recycle is to avoid creating trash all together!

- Explain to the participants the trouble plastic bags and other single use products bring. Propose them to find alternatives (cotton bags, reusable cups, water bottles, metal straws... etc.) or at least reuse plastic bags.
- In different countries, recycling works differently so it is important to explain to participants your country's system to prevent confusions.

Some data:

1. You can save 178kg of CO₂ (around 84% less emissions) by producing a ton of paper using recycled material rather than virgin material.
2. You can reduce emissions by 50% by producing a ton of cans using recycled material.
3. Recycling 351000 ton of packaging allows you to save 343000 tons of CO₂ emissions.
4. You can cut 56% of CO₂ emissions by producing glass with recycled material.

Traveling

- **Consult our “Sustainable Transport Infosheet” and send it to your volunteers.**
- **Choose public transports, bike or walk.** Use your car only if necessary.
- Do not speed up frequently and drive on an average speed of 90/110 km/h to economize up to 55 kg of CO₂ emissions.
- For medium-distance journeys (30-200 km), choose to travel by bus or by train. Alternatively, you can choose to travel by car with at least four people on board.
- For long-distance journeys (100-800 km) by groups of people, choose always to travel by train, by boat or by bus.
- For journeys of more than 800 km and only if the only solution is to take a plane, choose a direct flight or the least transfers possible.
- Promote new innovative services of environmentally friendly transportation: bike sharing, car sharing, taxi bus, reserved parking and lanes for car-pooling.

Some Data:

1. For instance, flying from London to Paris takes you 3.5 hours and it implies 244 kg of CO₂ emissions. Alternatively, covering the same distance by train takes you 2.5 hours and it implies 22 kg of CO₂ emissions.
2. Again, flying from London to Barcelona takes you 4.5 hours and it implies an emission of 277 kg of CO₂. Alternatively, taking the train takes you 20 hours and it implies an emission of 40 kg of CO₂.
3. If you give up using the car once a week for a journey of 10 km on average, you can save 70 euros of oil and 7.4 kg of CO₂ emissions per km.