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*Educational Cycle for International  
Volunteer Workcamp Leaders in the  
Czech Republic, Germany, and Italy:  
Learning Environments, Outcomes,  
and Recognition*

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*Executive Summary:*

*Educational Cycle for International  
Volunteer Workcamp Leaders in the  
Czech Republic, Germany, and Italy in  
a Nutshell*

*WURTINGER, Lukas*

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**The problem**

**Recognition of non-formal learning inside the formal education system** has been a **priority topic** of the European educational, youth work, and youth policies for many years. It is well proven that non-formal education can flexibly respond to the needs of learners and develop the competences necessary to successfully take up roles in society and at the labor market (e.g., Bárta 2021 and 2016, Bárta, Fennes, Gadinger 2021, and many others). However, according to the OECD (Not dated), *“learning that occurs outside the formal learning system is not well understood, made visible or, probably as a consequence, appropriately valued.”*

This mismatch is experienced in the daily reality by the youth-workers of the 3 NGOs that form the project consortium - **INEX** – Sdružení dobrovolných aktivit (the **Czech Republic**), **IBG** – Internationale Begegnung in Gemeinschaftsdiensten e.V. (**Germany**), **YAP** – Youth Action for Peace (**Italy**) - who are actively working with non-formal learning in the context of international volunteering. It is reasonable to believe that this represents a common problematic reality for more than a hundred organizations worldwide inside the network of International Voluntary Service organizations (IVS) and the young volunteers that they work with.

The **INSPIRIT** project (an Erasmus+ Key action 2 project financially supported by the European Commission) was carried out by the 3 mentioned **NGOs**, accompanied, examined and evaluated by one or two **researchers** in each of the **3 countries**, from **2018 to 2021**.

The main intentions were to **methodologically describe the activities the organizations offer**, to **measure their impact on competence development of young people**, and subsequently also to **strive towards recognition of the learning outcomes by the formal education system**.

## Solution approach

The INSPIRIT project and its **study** aimed at **understanding the experience young people gain** when getting involved in the organizations' activities **in the role of international workcamp leaders** and to **describe the educational methodology** behind the whole workcamp leaders' cycle. The **educational cycle for international volunteer workcamp leaders** is a program that all 3 organizations have in common and that exists in comparable equivalents in many other organizations within the network of IVS organizations. While IVS organizations and NGOs can consider this study a source of inspiration, the aim towards the formal educational institutions is to **support the general recognition of non-formal learning on a global scale, namely in the university curricula.**

An international workcamp is a volunteering opportunity, where groups of volunteers from different countries work and live together as a team on a short-term basis and for a not-for-profit cause, usually for one to three weeks during summer months. Each of these workcamps need leaders who, on top of being volunteers themselves, manage, organize, and lead all workcamp-related preparatory, implementation, and follow-up activities. In order to get prepared for the leadership role, an educational cycle is prepared for the young volunteers, guiding them through the different stages of the workcamp implementation process. And it is the whole educational cycle for international volunteer workcamp leaders that has been the focus of the INSPIRIT research, asking **what impacts such an experience has on young people studying at universities.**

Such young people, it may be presumed, are undergoing a specific and potentially enriching learning experience. **The role of a volunteering workcamp leader is extending the common international volunteering framework by adding an element of leadership and an element of deliberate and institutionalized learning opportunities.** Young people who decide to devote their time to the workcamp leader experience engage in a year-long programme which includes a training part as well as reflection sessions. All of those elements make the volunteering workcamp leader experience a unique learning environment with links to certain elements of university education.

Exploration of the learning outcomes in the workcamp leaders was the main focus of the research endeavour, which was reflected in the main research question: **What developments can be identified in connection to the 'INSPIRIT programme for young workcamp leaders' in its participants?** In order to also keep in mind specific learning contexts during such volunteering engagements, as well as practical implications of the developments identified in the research participants, specific research questions were defined:

- **What activities of the INSPIRIT programme can be linked to developments in its participants?**
- **What developments in INSPIRIT programme participants can be linked to their professional lives (study and/or work)?**

This INSPIRIT research was conducted in two yearly cycles in 2019 & 2021 separately in the Czech Republic, Germany and Italy, but followed the same methodological design. The pandemic of COVID-19 naturally had an impact on the project. It was put on halt for the duration of 2020 and restarted in the beginning of 2021. Adjusting the research to the new reality required also changes in the methodology, which were again implemented in all three countries.

## Conclusions

As the INSPIRIT research shows, multitude of positive impacts can be found in workcamp leaders at the end of the educational cycle. We identified large sections of the findings in the three different national reports to be overlapping and closing in on a set of common developments in international volunteer workcamp leaders.

We see a strong possibility that the rather universal model of the workcamp leaders' cycle that is applied in all three countries leads to very similar learning outcomes across the different cultural contexts in which it is applied. This is an important outcome of this research as it suggests that **the blueprint of the international volunteer workcamp leaders' cycle can be applied in different cultural contexts and still inspire positive learning outcomes in the involved young people.**

Common findings found across the three national reports fall into the following categories:

- **multicompetence development,**
- **multitude of learning contexts, and**
- **high satisfaction of participants.**

**Participants in all three countries indicated developments in a wide range of various competences, a phenomenon we call a "multicompetence development" in this report.** In course of the workcamp leaders' cycle, the participants refined, as a whole or in part, almost **all of the eight key competences for lifelong learning** as defined by the Council of the European Union (2018), namely: **literacy competence, multilingual competence, mathematical competence and competence in science, technology and engineering, digital competence, personal, social and learning to learn competence, citizenship competence, entrepreneurship competence, and cultural awareness and expression competence.**

There are three areas, closely related to the nature of the international workcamp leadership experience, in which the participants seem to be aware of particularly refined competences: **leadership, intercultural domain, and active citizenship.**

Two aspects of the multicompetence development to be pointed out:

1. **Full competence development:** Participants often describe their competence development as a full one, i.e., as including all four key competence components: **knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values.** The international workcamp leadership experience allows them to develop competences fully, not limiting them to only the knowledge aspect which heavily dominates the aim of the formal education systems, but allowing them to also hone their skills, and to think deeper on the attitudes and values related to given competences.
2. **Development of competences underrepresented in the formal education system:** Many of the competences that the participants develop are either completely missing from the formal education curricula or are underrepresented in there. In this context, the workcamp leaders' cycle is a unique opportunity to develop these competences as they would otherwise be largely neglected during the formal education pathway. Examples of these competences are again the most prominent areas developed by the participants: leadership, intercultural domain, and active citizenship. None of these areas present key and explicit objectives in mainstream formal education, despite the apparent advantages.

**Both points suggest that the workcamp leadership experience has a high potential to successfully complement the formal education pathways of the young people.**

**All three research reports also emphasize the multitude of learning contexts which occur during the workcamp leadership experience.** The whole educational cycle contains several main phases in which non-formal methods are combined with informal learning. Within the non-formal learning and informal learning opportunities, the young people enjoy some specific formats that help them move even further in their development: peer learning, work-based learning, hands-on learning, experimentation, and (guided) reflection. **Apart from the peer learning aspect, none of the other learning contexts are regularly used in the mainstream formal education system which, again, creates potential for the workcamp leadership experience to become a valued complementary learning opportunity.**

**Very high satisfaction of young people** with undertaking the workcamp leadership experience also occurred in all three national reports. This suggests that in all three countries, quality workcamp cycles are implemented, and **based on the research it seems three particular sets of aspects contribute heavily to the success of the workcamp leaders' cycles in the eyes of the young people:**

- **fun, enthusiasm, and emotions,**
- **groups, friends, and bonds,**
- **new experience, new cultures, and new relationships.**

Young people talk about the fun they had during the different stages of the educational cycle, describe the enthusiasm of their own and their peers, and also a wide range of other emotions that are linked to their own personal experience of the process. They also appreciate not being alone in the process, working in groups, meeting new friends, and overall creating bonds to people. They also are seeking and appreciating experiencing something new and out of the ordinary, meeting and exploring new cultures, and creating new relationships to others, to themselves, and to the places they visit. All of these aspects are important part of the non-formal methods used in the training of leaders and in the final international reflection session, but they also occur naturally during the workcamp itself. **Again it needs to be noted that these aspects are hardly dominating the formal education system, and as such create a welcome mix for the young people to attract them to the learning opportunities within the workcamp cycle.**

It is important to outline the reasons for which **recognition of the workcamp leadership experience in the formal education system benefits all actors involved: the students, the formal education institutions, and the society at large.** In case of students, the workcamp leaders' cycle offers them a chance for multicompetence development in a multitude of learning contexts, and all of that combined with a mix of aspects they themselves find favourable and attractive, such as fun, bonds, and new cultures. In case of the formal education institutions, the workcamp leadership cycle offers them a unique internship opportunity which not only supports their students in competence development, but also improves the profile of the institutions themselves as such unique internship opportunities are, as of today, rather rare. And lastly, the society benefits from the workcamps not only immediately (through the results of the concrete workcamps), but also in the long run as the young people who undergo the leadership experience become more active in the public sphere, are more likely to take up responsibility for the public matters, and better align their values with those of freedom, diversity, and democracy.

By sharing the results of the INSPIRIT project and research, we envision an increased cooperation between NGOs and formal education institutions, leading to a higher general recognition of non-formal learning, and supporting the quality of learning for young people.

It is the hope of the whole team behind the INSPIRIT project that this research publication helps highlight the workcamp leadership educational cycle as not only viable, but also unique and highly desirable learning and internship opportunity. We hope that the developments of the young people who have been researched in the process become inspiration to further young people to seek such opportunities in the future. We also hope that our research findings encourage the formal educational institutions to officially recognize such opportunities as part of the educational pathway of young people. In the same way we hope the formal educational institutions to become partners with the organizations implementing the workcamp leadership educational cycles in order to mutually support each other in their respective work.

*This text has been heavily based on various sections of this publication, with consent of respective authors.*

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# *Introduction: From Educational Cycle for International Volunteer Workcamp Leaders to Formal Education Recognition*

*BÁRTA, Ondřej*

*MARKOVÁ, Veronika*

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Recognition of non-formal learning inside the formal education system has been a priority topic of the European educational, youth work, and youth policies for many years. It is well proven that non-formal education can flexibly respond to the needs of learners and develop the competences necessary to successfully take up roles in society and at the labor market (e.g., Bárta 2021 and 2016, Bárta, Fennes, Gadinger 2021, and many others). However, according to the OECD (Not dated), *“learning that occurs outside the formal learning system is not well understood, made visible or, probably as a consequence, appropriately valued.”*

This is something that us, INEX – Sdružení dobrovolných aktivit (the Czech Republic), IBG – Internationale Begegnung in Gemeinschaftsdiensten e.V. (Germany), and YAP – Youth Action for Peace (Italy), three NGOs who are actively working with non-formal learning in the context of international volunteering, also experience at our daily work as youth-workers. Therefore, we decided to carry out the INSPIRIT project (an Erasmus+ Key action 2 project financially supported by the European Commission), intending to methodologically describe the activities the organizations offer, to measure their impact on competence development of young people, and subsequently also to strive towards recognition of the learning outcomes by the formal education system.

The INSPIRIT project and its study aim at understanding the experience young people gain when getting involved as international workcamp leaders and to describe the educational methodology behind the whole workcamp leaders' cycle. An international workcamp is a volunteering opportunity, where groups of volunteers from different countries work and live together as a team on a short-term basis and for a not-for-profit cause, usually for one to three weeks during summer months. Each of these workcamps need leaders who, on top of being volunteers themselves, manage, organize, and lead all workcamp-related preparatory, implementation, and follow-up activities. In order to get prepared for the leadership role, an educational cycle is prepared for the young volunteers, guiding them through the different stages of the workcamp implementation process. And it is the whole educational cycle for international volunteer workcamp leaders that has been the focus of the INSPIRIT research, asking what impacts such an experience has on young people studying at universities.

We chose educational cycle for international volunteer workcamp leaders as it is a program that all 3 organizations (INEX-SDA, IBG, and YAP) have in common, together with more than a hundred organizations worldwide inside the network of International Voluntary Service organizations (IVS). *“IVS has since 1920 sought to respond to the prevalent issues of society on a local and global level, it aims to pursue peace and promotes nonviolence through international understanding, mutual respect, friendship, exchange, and cooperation among the people of the world.”* (CCIVS 2022) Therefore, the idea was not only for us to understand and measure the impact of participating in the educational cycle for international volunteer workcamp leaders, but also to share the final study with the large network of IVS organizations, other NGOs, and multiple higher education institutions. While IVS organizations and NGOs can consider this study a source of inspiration, the aim towards the formal educational institutions is to support the general recognition of non-formal learning on a global scale, namely in the university curricula. As the INSPIRIT research shows, multitude of positive impacts can be found in workcamp leaders at the end of the educational cycle. These impacts, we believe, well complement the formal education objectives, allow the students to widen their horizons and skillsets, and inspire them to reflect on their attitudes and values. All of these research findings suggest that recognizing the educational cycles for international volunteer workcamp leaders as official internship opportunities would benefit greatly not only the students as described above, but also the formal educational institutions themselves (in improving profiles of their own students and offering valuable international internship opportunity), and also the society (as the volunteers always work towards increasing public welfare).

As youth workers, we are certain that recognition of the non-formal volunteering programs in higher education is also one of the best ways to increase their impact. We believe that by sharing these results, higher number of young people will get involved and benefit from the experience, while institutions will better understand its nature, advantages, and impact of the non-formal education and volunteering. In other words, by sharing the results of the INSPIRIT project and research, we envision an increased cooperation between NGOs and formal education institutions, leading to a higher general recognition of non-formal learning, and supporting the quality of learning for young people.

With these aims in mind, we cordially invite you to read through this publication which features three national research reports (one for each participating country: the Czech Republic, Germany, and Italy), and conclusions which highlight the most crucial research findings from all three national reports.

Enjoy the read!

*Your INSPIRIT team*

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*Developments in International  
Volunteer Workcamp Leaders in the  
Czech Republic*

*INSPIRIT Project: Czech National Research Report*

*2019 & 2021*

*BÁRTA, Ondřej*

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*Prague, Czech Republic, 2021*

*Coordinated by INEX-SDA*

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## Introductory Remarks

INSPIRIT project provided a chance to shed more light on the experience of young people who undertake a specific volunteering task: leading an international volunteering workcamp. Such young people, it may be presumed, are undergoing a specific and potentially enriching learning experience. The role of a volunteering workcamp leader, moreover, is extending the common international volunteering framework by adding an element of leadership and an element of deliberate and institutionalized learning opportunities. Young people who decide to devote their time to the workcamp leader experience engage in a year-long programme which includes a training part as well as reflection sessions. All of these opportunities are in the Czech Republic prepared and organized by INEX-SDA, a Czech NGO founded in 1991 and focusing on international voluntary work and intercultural education.

All of the aforementioned elements make the volunteering workcamp leader experience a unique learning environment with links to certain elements of university education. In order to probe the potential for synergies between university curricula and the volunteering workcamp leaders' programmes in different European countries, INSPIRIT project took up the ambition to explore learning environments and, most importantly, learning outcomes of the volunteering workcamp leaders. Mapping the learning outcomes allows for a comparison with competence profiles of university graduates, highlighting potential synergies between the two learning environments: the formal setting of the university education, and the non-formal and informal setting of the volunteering experience. In doing so, potential for cooperation between the universities and the volunteering sector is uncovered: supporting university students in their personal and professional development via the volunteering experience and, at the same time, boosting the volunteering sector by attracting more young people to participate in voluntary activities.

Exploration of the learning outcomes in the workcamp leaders is the main focus of the INSPIRIT research endeavour, as outlined above, and therefore the main research question was defined as follows: **What developments can be identified in connection to the 'INSPIRIT programme for young workcamp leaders' in its participants?** In order to also keep in mind specific learning contexts which may occur during such volunteering engagements, as well as practical implications of the developments identified in the research participants, specific research questions were defined:

- **What activities of the INSPIRIT programme can be linked to developments in its participants?**
- **What developments in INSPIRIT programme participants can be linked to their professional lives (study and/or work)?**

All in all, INSPIRIT research aims at identifying learning outcomes in young people in workcamp leadership roles with a special emphasis on the synergies between these outcomes and competence profiles of university students in order to support cooperation between the volunteering and the university sectors.

This research report contains results from a research conducted in 2019 and in 2021 in the Czech Republic and provides the reader with (1) an overview of research focusing on international volunteering in the Czech Republic, (2) a description of the cycle of the workcamp volunteer leaders,

(3) methodological foundations of the INSPIRIT research conducted in 2019 and in 2021, (4) research results combining 2019 and 2021 data collections, and (5) a brief summary and outlook for future research endeavours in the domain of international volunteering.

## 1. International Volunteering in the Czech Republic

This chapter firstly defines volunteering, then showcases positive effects of volunteering (a) to an individual volunteer and (b) to society at large, and concludes with (a) suggesting that support for volunteering in the Czech Republic is vital, and (b) that there are further aspects to the role of volunteer workcamp leader to be explored through the research that was conducted in the INSPIRIT project.

To define volunteering, it seems reasonable to start with general definitions used in international research. Eurofound (2012) defines volunteering simply as *“an activity that someone performs, entirely at their own will, for other people or for a community without any expectation of monetary payment or any other direct return.”* Similarly, Stukas, Snyder, and Clary (2014:2) see volunteering as *“a form of prosocial behavior that involves a freely chosen decision to commit a sustained amount of time and effort to helping another person, group, or cause, typically through a non-profit organization.”* These definitions seem to provide a basic overview of what can be considered a volunteering activity, but as it often is, the concrete definitions differ from context to context.

Various countries across the EU as well as different transnational entities (e.g., the EU, the UN, or the CoE) use their own particular definitions of volunteering. A useful, albeit a bit outdated, insight into national definitions of volunteering, can be found in a large study assigned by the European Commission (GHK 2010: 50-54). This study suggests that there are some common elements that come to play when defining volunteering in the EU (ibid: 55; c.f.: European Commission 2004, European Commission 2019, )<sup>1</sup>. Volunteering activities (GHK 2010: 55):

- *“are performed with the free will of the individual;*
- *are developed in the framework of non-profit, non- governmental organisations;*
- *have no professional character;*
- *are non-paid; and*
- *[are] carried out for the benefit of the community or a third party.”*

These elements suggest that, for example, helping out a family member is not considered volunteering in the EU (hence the framework of the civil society). Most importantly, however, these elements show

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<sup>1</sup> Interestingly, Cnaan, Handy, and Wadsworth (1996) uncovered four dimensions underlying common definitions of volunteering used in the literature: free choice, remuneration, structure, and intended beneficiaries. In their view, each of these dimensions ranges from “broad” to “pure” volunteers (e.g., the dimension of remuneration includes the following continuum: none at all, none expected, reimbursement of expenses, and stipend/low pay). They suggest the perceptions of volunteers change context to context, but these dimensions can universally be used to see whether a broader or a purer definition of volunteering is used in the given context.

that despite differences in concrete definitions on the national levels, volunteering seems to carry a common general understanding across the EU.

Based on this common understanding, the EU has a long-standing tradition of supporting international volunteering activities within its borders (former European Voluntary Service and current European Solidarity Corps) and outside of them (EU Aid Volunteers). Focusing on the current volunteering landscape within the EU, the European Solidarity Corps programme (European Commission 2019) sees volunteering as a solidarity activity that provides young people with the opportunity to contribute to the daily work of organisations to the ultimate benefit of the communities within which the activities are carried out. As the main mechanism for promoting solidarity as a value, volunteering aims to help overcoming important societal challenges and addresses the needs of local communities. Moreover, volunteering also enables young people to acquire useful experience, skills, and competences for their personal, educational, social, civic, and professional development, thereby improving their employability and increasing active citizenship levels. Volunteering can take place in a broad range of areas, such as in the fields of environmental protection, climate change mitigation and greater social inclusion. It should be noted that the added value of volunteering and international volunteering, was already pointed out at the beginning of this century when the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States of the EU (2002) emphasized that:

*“2. Various forms of voluntary activity for young people, including those in the context of the European Union action entitled "European voluntary service" forming part of the "Youth" action programme, have added social value because:*

*(a) they transmit universal values with regard to human rights, democracy, anti-racism and solidarity, and sustainable development;*

*(b) they promote social participation, voluntary engagement and active citizenship and strengthen civil society at all levels;*

*(c) they promote the social inclusion of young people, contribute to the development of young people's creativity, enterprise and social innovation.*

*3. Youth voluntary activity provides the opportunity for young people to develop a number of personal and professional skills, and as such contributes to their greater employability and to their participation in society in general.”*

These added aspects of personal development are well in line with the perception of volunteering that the INEX-SDA considers vital: helping community, landmarks, people, nature, and through that work develop personal, civic, and professional life, and support mutual understanding and non-violence (INEX-SDA 2021a, 2021b). All of the aforementioned assumptions on the impacts of international volunteering are confirmed in various studies. For example, according to the *Study on the Impact of Transnational Volunteering through the European Voluntary Service* (European Commission 2017), impacts of international volunteering on the individuals are seen as very positive, with knowledge gains and competence development among the identified impacts, as well as positive ramifications for the career and social capital areas. Similarly, a study on career impacts of volunteering shows that competence development gained through volunteering is a valuable asset at the labour market (Souto-Otero and Shields 2016).

When it comes to volunteering in the Czech Republic, several sources map the situation. In 2010, the Czech Republic fell into the category of “relatively low” volunteer engagement with 10-19% of adults engaged in volunteering activities (GHK 2010a). At the same time, Youth Wiki (not dated) suggests that “around a half of all volunteering activities in the country are done by young people and youth organisations”, and this is also confirmed by a Czech national report from 2010 (GHK 2010b). All in all, this shows a rather high interest of Czech young people in volunteering and could represent a beneficial shift in the culture of volunteering despite widely agreed negative impacts of communist regime legacy on the volunteering domain (Pintea et al. not dated). The negative influence of former communist regimes on volunteering can be tracked not only in the Czech Republic, but also in other former soviet republics, such as Romania (Pintea et al. not dated), and some authors (ibid) suggest efforts are made on national level of the post-soviet countries to support volunteering to catch up with the western countries. Despite these recommendations, some recent studies (de Bonfils, King 2018: 14) suggest that “there is no systematically developed infrastructure for voluntary organisations” in the Czech Republic. Furthermore, the study states that (ibid: 14):

*“There are some regional volunteer centres in the country, many of which are independently managed by different local organisations. Nevertheless, the majority of regional volunteer centres are members of the Alliance for Development in Volunteering, and some work in cooperation with HESTIA. Some basic quality standards for these volunteer centres were established during the European Year of Volunteering 2011, but many are still to be implemented.”*

The aforementioned post-soviet legacy may also be at the cause of the Czech Republic rating rather low when it comes to recognizing the volunteering experience as an asset in the labour market (Souto-Otero and Shields 2016). While in the western countries, the recognition of competence development is rather high in the labour market, in the Czech Republic, only 14% of respondents see the value of volunteering in connection to the labour market (as compared to 33% in Sweden, for example; Souto-Otero and Shields 2016).

Research in the Czech Republic (Frič et al. 2010) shows that 47% of volunteers who decided for volunteering learned about this possibility from their relatives and friends; 12% of volunteers learned about it from their colleagues at work; and 38% of volunteers began volunteering within the organization where they were members. Only 9% of volunteers decided to volunteer based on advertisements on the internet, or in magazines and newspapers. This shows the importance of institutions as networks that support volunteering: schools, workplace, and most importantly fellow students and schoolmates.

All in all, as we have seen in this chapter, volunteering in general is confirmed as playing role in development of various competences, in gaining new knowledge, and even in spreading democratic values. All of these positive impacts of volunteering are also related to labour market advantages in those young people who engage in volunteering. Nevertheless, the Czech Republic is one of the post-soviet countries in which volunteering culture has been damaged by the communist past, and it is still lagging behind western countries when it comes to the ratios of volunteers in the population and in the amount of emphasis that the labour market puts to volunteering as source of valuable experience. Available reports recommend more systematic support for the volunteering sector, and it shows that

institutions such as schools or private companies are viable sources of information on volunteering opportunities.

In line with all these findings, the role of volunteer workcamp leaders is further explored in this study, as it brings specific angles to the discussion on volunteering: the volunteer is a leadership position; there is a systematic educational cycle that accompanies the volunteers in this position; and there is a potential to link this experience directly to the university studies in case it is recognized as a traineeship or an internship. None of these aspects have yet been systematically researched in the Czech context, and if the experience is proven beneficial to the young people, there is a potential to support development of institutional ties between the voluntary sector and the universities in the Czech Republic. Recognizing volunteer workcamp leader experience as a viable traineeship or internship options can provide valuable experience for university students and support the development of the volunteering sector and culture in return.

## 2. International Volunteer Workcamp Leaders' Cycle

International volunteer workcamp leader is a role in which young people devote their time to organizing and leading various voluntary welfare projects in a certain country. The voluntary welfare projects are attended by volunteers from all over the world and the international volunteer workcamp leader is expected not only to prepare the project to run smoothly, but also to overlook the welfare project implementation directly on the spot. The workcamp is usually held for one or two weeks and has a clearly defined framework and goals in order to attract such volunteers and leaders who are interested in the topic. Topics of the international volunteer workcamps vary from maintenance of historical monuments, through organizing cultural events, to supporting vulnerable people.

Apparently, the abovementioned process is a rather complex one, and certain stages can be identified in the cycle of an international volunteer workcamp leader. In summary, these stages include:

- 1) Planning the yearly cycle.
- 2) Recruiting the workcamp leaders.
- 3) Holding a training for the workcamp leaders.
- 4) Preparing the workcamps.
- 5) Implementing the workcamps.
- 6) Reflecting on the workcamps.

First and foremost, each year a **planning of the workcamps** and related events takes place. In the Czech Republic, INEX-SDA takes on this role, surveying the terrain, putting together a list of workcamps, evaluating their welfare impact, making sure contact persons are available in each of the selected workcamps, and planning activities for the future workcamp leaders. The aim of this phase is to prepare all necessary background materials to attract future workcamp leaders and to take further steps.

Subsequently, potential **workcamp leaders are recruited** via open calls and recruitment events taking place at different locations in the Czech Republic. Again, INEX-SDA is the main actor in this phase, aiming at establishing a pool of young people who are invited to future activities and prepared for

their role of an international volunteer workcamp leader. Young people are informed of all future steps along the way and asked to sign up for one of trainings in order to prepare them for their role of the workcamp leaders.

At the **training for workcamp leaders**, all details of preparation and implementation of international volunteer workcamps are outlined, young people have a chance to meet other workcamp leaders (some of whom they will work very closely with), get acquainted with the whole process leading to their workcamp experience, have a chance to deal with questions and set their expectations in line with reality, and generally gain ownership of the whole process. The training is usually held during one weekend and engages a range of non-formal learning techniques to cover a wide range of areas connected to the workcamps and the role of the leaders. As shown above, there are numerous goals of this activity, but the main ones can be summarized as follows:

- To provide young people with a holistic picture of what is expected of them as workcamp leaders;
- To identify workcamp leaders with take the lead on particular workcamps;
- To match workcamp leaders with their partners in order to establish dyads working together at each of the workcamps.

When workcamp leaders team up and learn details of the upcoming process, the work of the workcamp leaders starts by **preparing the workcamps**. This preparatory stage is led by the dyads of workcamp leaders themselves, with INEX-SDA staying in touch and offering support throughout the process and lasts from several weeks to two months. The workcamp leaders together undertake a preparatory visit during which all details and practicalities are sorted with the hosts of the workcamps; media communication is set up in order to inform the public of the workcamp; and preparatory materials are prepared and sent to the volunteers themselves and the workcamp leaders get in touch with the participants as well.

Eventually, the workcamps themselves start, with the leaders arriving ahead of the other participating volunteers in order to prepare necessities on the spot. Once the other volunteers arrive, the workcamp leaders work with them towards the goals of the particular workcamp, organizing also leisure time activities, communicating with the local hosts, and overall **ensuring a smooth running of the whole workcamp**. Workcamps last between one and two weeks and are usually held at one place with no need for relocations.

After the workcamp implementation phase is over, the leaders and the volunteers leave for home, the **reflection stage** begins. Starting on the individual level, each of the leaders has time to reflect on their respective experience in the workcamp. After a few months, an international group reflection is organized to help support the reflection process. At that point, the workcamp leaders have a chance to come together with their peers who undertook the same role at different workcamps, and even with workcamp leaders from other countries. Group reflection aims at sharing experience from the workcamps on both formal and informal platforms over a course of a few days, aiming at supporting the reflection processes of the individuals as well as supporting conscious assessment of learning outcomes in individuals.

All in all, the cycle of the international volunteer workcamp leaders is approximately six months, with the start of the whole process during the spring, the workcamp itself implemented in summer months, and the final reflection session held in autumn of a given year.

### 3. Methodology

INSPIRIT research conducted in 2019 and in 2021<sup>2</sup> aimed at exploring positive developments in workcamp leaders of INEX-SDA organized international volunteer workcamps. The main research question was as follows:

**What developments can be identified in connection to the 'INSPIRIT programme for young workcamp leaders' in its participants?**

Specific research questions, further leading the focus of the 2019 and 2021 research, were as follows:

- What activities of the INSPIRIT programme can be linked to developments in its participants?
- What developments in INSPIRIT programme participants can be linked to their professional lives (study and/or work)?

Qualitative methodology combining several data collection methods was used in order to provide insights into previously unexplored area of a specific type of volunteering: experience of young international workcamp leaders. The pandemic of COVID-19 caused the 2021 methodology to differ from the 2019 processes, and hence the 2019 methodology is presented first, and 2021 adjustments are outlined in the second part of this chapter. Both methodological approaches described below link to the research questions above.

#### 3.1. Methodology of the 2019 INSPIRIT Research

First and foremost, semi-structured interviews were held. During the spring 2019, six young people were interviewed both before and after attending the training for workcamp leaders. Subsequently, to widen the data corpus, additional seven young people were interviewed in the preparatory phase before the workcamp implementation in summer 2019. All in all, 13 workcamp leaders were interviewed and 19 interviews lasting 30-60 minutes each were collected in total. Interviews were recorded with consents of the research participants, and the recordings were subsequently analysed in order to answer the research questions. All interview recordings were anonymized, and all names used in this report in connection to the research participants are fictional. Interview guidelines used in the interviews are quoted as Annexes to this report.

Moreover, direct and participative observations of two trainings for the workcamp leaders in spring 2019 as well as of the final international reflection session in autumn 2019 were conducted. Field notes as well as recordings of some group reflections were used to collect data, with consent of the

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<sup>2</sup> Pandemic of COVID-19 that started in 2020 prevented any research work in 2020 and had further implications for the methodology in 2021 as debated further in the text.

workcamp leaders. The field notes as well as the recordings were subsequently used for data analysis and triangulated with the semi-structured interviews in order to provide as detailed picture of the developments in young workcamp leaders as possible.

Workcamp leaders were also asked to keep a diary in order to support their reflection of ongoing processes as well as to provide additional source of research data. Unfortunately, only a few of the workcamp leaders kept the diaries, but those shared with the researcher were also used in data analyses, further widening the data corpus. All of the aforementioned data was collected during the 2019 INSPIRIT research and analysed in order to explore the research questions stated above.

### 3.2. Methodology of the 2021 INSPIRIT Research

Given the limitations dictated by the global COVID-19 pandemic which effectively prevented any face-to-face research methods, several innovative research tools have been designed, namely:

- learning diaries,
- written reflections, and
- outcomes of the national reflection groups.

Firstly, two different learning diaries were set up: one aiming at data collection after the initial workcamp leader training held in spring of 2021; and one collecting data after the workcamps took place in summer of 2021. Both learning diaries were uploaded into an online environment and links shared with the workcamp leaders, with INEX-SDA personnel asking the workcamp leaders to fill them in. Both types of learning diary are quoted as Annexes to this report. All in all, 12 workcamp leaders filled in the learning diary after the workcamp leader training in spring 2021, and 5 workcamp leaders filled in the learning diary after the workcamp itself in summer 2021.

Secondly, two key sessions were held at the international reflection meeting in autumn 2021 in Germany, where the method of written reflections and national reflection groups were used.

Written reflections methodology is a reflective activity which lasts 2 hours and aims at the following:

- reflecting upon workcamp experience,
- identifying personal learning moments,
- recognizing individual learning curves,
- reflecting upon personal growth and development throughout and after the camp, and
- raising awareness of the newly gained competences.

In the first part of the written reflections session, theoretical input on the nature of competences, the components of competences, and competence development, is provided to the participants. Subsequently, a method called “dream sequence” is implemented, giving the participants time and space to remember as vividly as possible their workcamp experience. As a result of the dream sequence, the participants work with a flipchart, and write down all different activities they actively participated in, during the workcamp. When the flipchart work is done, an introduction to the 7

competence categories prepared by the trainers is done, with the following categories explained to the participants:

- communication,
- learning to learn,
- mathematical and technical competence,
- leadership,
- relationship,
- management, and
- cultural awareness.

Participants subsequently return to their flipcharts and use the competence framework above to link the activities they took part in during the workcamp with competence development that took place as a result. Competences above are numbered and the participants are asked to only add numbers of competences to each of the activities they listed.

As a result of this session, flipcharts with concrete activities and their links to the competence development, as seen by the participants, are available for data analysis. Three flipcharts<sup>3</sup> have been completed by Czech participants of the international reflection session and are included in the analyses in the following chapters. All flipcharts are anonymous, and the participants were informed about the research use of the flipchart. Detailed description of the written reflection session methodology can be found in the Annexes to this report.

Lastly, national reflection sessions were held during the international reflection meeting in Germany in autumn 2021. These sessions were held in the national groups and using the mother tongue of the participants and consisted of a combination of flipchart-related tasks, and open reflection debate. These national reflection sessions were audio recorded with consent of the participants, and these recordings were analysed, with results included in the chapters below. Approximately 120 minutes of recordings were collected in the Czech national reflection session. Detailed methodology of the national reflection sessions can be found in the Annexes to this report.

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<sup>3</sup> This rather low attendance was heavily influenced by restrictions imposed in connection to the COVID-19 pandemic.



*Training of workcamp leaders held by INEX-SDA.*

#### 4. Research Results

Firstly, profile of the respondents is described; motivations and expectations towards the workcamp leader role are depicted; and developments of the participants are showcased. All direct quotations are in *italics* in order to distinguish them from general research findings written in regular font. All the direct quotations are also translations, as all of the interviews and some of the written data were collected in Czech language.

##### 4.1. Who Took Part in the 2019 and 2021 Research?

All of the respondents were university students from the Czech Republic, between 20 and 24 years of age, in either Bachelor's or Master's study programmes. Small sub-group of the respondents came from families with different than Czech roots, however, all of them were living in the Czech Republic most of their lives. Although originally coming from settlements of various sizes, all of them are living in medium to large cities in the Czech Republic now, due to the locations of the universities they attend. Study fields of the respondents also vary, ranging from social work, psychotherapy, international and developmental studies, teaching professions, architecture, all the way to economic, political, or cultural studies. All of the respondents have at least a vacation experience from abroad and vast majority also has other, more extensive experience with travelling abroad: au pair stays, study periods abroad, attending workcamps abroad, stays supported by Work and Travel visa frameworks, summer schools, and even visiting families abroad. Volunteering is a field where most of the respondents already had some experience, with their volunteering engagements ranging from helping

international students settle down when coming into the Czech Republic, through working for established NGOs to local community volunteering projects. Some of the respondents also had experience with volunteering abroad, most of them attending workcamps abroad in the past.

When it came to engaging the respondents to become workcamp leaders, the motivation from a seasoned volunteer who gave a lecture at their home university, was often crucial in 2019. Hearing what the workcamp leader experience is about and having a chance to ask questions and stay in touch were frequently mentioned as decisive factors for getting engaged in INEX-SDA 2019 workcamp cycle and subsequently also in the research activities. In 2021, the situation was slightly different as some of the universities already started including the workcamp opportunities into their own promotion activities focusing on internships. This resulted in two accomplishments: firstly, new volunteers interested in taking up the role of workcamp leaders emerged in 2021; and secondly, the cycle of connecting the volunteering opportunities with the obligations related to the university studies seems to have gained a life of its own and is now continuing with no need for further interventions from INEX-SDA. This gave INEX-SDA personnel more space to try engaging with new educational institutions, widening the network of institutions that take part in the process.

All in all, most respondents had majority backgrounds, most of them had a rather extensive experience from abroad, and all of them were university students, nevertheless, their fields of studies varied widely. Connected to the abovementioned, all of the respondents were comfortable communicating in English, most also had previous volunteering experience, and some even volunteered abroad. To engage them in the cycle of workcamp leaders, a personal approach of sharing direct experience at the university soil made a profound impact.

#### 4.2. What Motivations, Expectations and Worries Were Expressed?

**Motivation towards starting the process of becoming a workcamp leader often stems from the desire to meet new people.** Be it people with similar values as the workcamp leaders, potentially gaining friends with similar interests and priorities; be it people from different cultures than workcamp leaders, creating opportunities for cultural exchange and enrichment; be it young people with fewer opportunities or physical or mental disabilities, offering a chance to become more empathetic; all of these are important to the young people when setting off on their journey to become workcamp leaders. As one of the respondents put it: *“This is really cool for me, because I will discover new languages, explore new cultures, make new friends, meet new people, all of that is amazing.”*

**Another widely spread motivation to become a workcamp leader is the role of a leader itself.** Young people mentioned aspects such as working with a fellow leader during one workcamp, arranging for all responsibilities together and managing the dynamics of working in a dyad; developing and strengthening interpersonal communication competences; and trying out the leading role and enhancing skills that come with such a position in the group. Apparently, young people find a chance to put themselves into the leader’s shoes appealing for various reasons, all of them connected to different areas of personal development: planning and organization; cooperation; communication; leadership skills; and in general, exploring unknown territories.

One of the positive aspects discovered during the interviews in the initial phases of the workcamp cycle was that **young people have a rather good overview of the whole process**, and single steps in between they need to take. Despite not being clear on what exactly to expect in each of the steps,

which is understandable, given the lack of personal experience, they are well informed of the major milestones on the way and main tasks these milestones include.

Naturally, **worries are also included in the initial phases of the workcamp cycle**, most commonly connected to people present in all stages of the process of becoming the workcamp leader. Concerns over other leaders or volunteers at the workcamp with no genuine interest in taking part; concerns about making mistakes in communication with other people; worries connected to language barriers with volunteers whose levels of English might not be sufficient; concerns that no good match will be found in search for a workcamp leading partner; worries in dealing with responsibility for other volunteers as well as any other actors (e.g. children or young people with fewer opportunities or mental or health disabilities); and of course, a general worry of how to deal with new, albeit interesting, people they meet along the way. Fortunately, these worries were by far not the prevalent emotions expressed by the respondents in the initial phases of the workcamp cycle, and even in people who voiced some uncertainties, one could also hear a dedication to overcoming hurdles and obstacles: *“Anyway, I feel that, should something negative happen, I will handle it one way or the other.”*

**Overall, expectations in the initial phases of the workcamp cycle can be summarized as a desire to be enriched by a new and demanding experience.** This enrichment, as some of the respondents explicitly state, is also seen as potentially useful in the labour market, widening the portfolio of skills the young people master. Overcoming their own insecurities, deepening their insight into a particular topic they wish to pursue in the workcamp, enhancing their language skills, personal development on many different levels, but also a good feeling of going through the whole process and helping others, and having fun along the way; all of these are among the aspects with a potential to enrich young people when taking up the role of a workcamp leader. As one of the respondents described: *“I believe that I will be happy to have enrolled, to have gone through this, and I assume I will be looking forward to another year and new workcamps.”*

**Connection to the field of study** is also mentioned by some of the respondents, with a vision to gain hands-on experience which is often missing in the university curricula. *“I actually think this is one of the best ways to undergo an internship, because this way you are directly involved in all processes, there is no sitting in an office and filing documents, which is usually what interns are doing these days...”* Especially the specificity of the leadership role is perceived as an asset, providing young people with a scarce opportunity to engage in group management, while also taking steps to prepare for the role in advance.

#### 4.3. What Experience Was Gained at the Training for Leaders?

As described above, a training for the workcamp leaders is held in spring of a given year to provide the young people with a learning and networking opportunity and to prepare them for the upcoming workcamp and their leadership role. The training is usually held during one weekend and aims at outlining a detailed roadmap for all the leaders, including workcamp preparations, workcamp implementation, and further reflection-related activities after the workcamp is finished. Several such trainings are held every year in order to keep the number of participants to around 20 and to create a comfortable environment in which non-formal learning methods as well as a reasonable space for

informal sharing is created. Trainings aim at getting the workcamp leaders on track in terms of information necessary for the task, finding a workcamp leader partner, choosing a particular workcamp, and having a chance to think through their approach to the challenges ahead. In 2019, the trainings took place at different locations in the Czech Republic during May and June; in 2021, the trainings took place only during late June and early July, due to COVID-19 related restrictions which did not allow for the trainings to be implemented in the Czech Republic earlier. This change in timing subsequently also meant less time between the training and the workcamp itself, and hence also less time for subsequent workcamp preparations done by the workcamp leaders. This was reflected by some of the participants and mentioned as demanding, as there was little time to spare between the training and the workcamp in 2021.

All in all, **respondents describe the training to be a positive experience** combining fun (*"It was really nice, I did not expect the training to be so much fun, I think there was lots of information they tried to convey to us and I am really glad they tried doing so using as much fun as possible."*), meeting new and interesting people (*"I liked meeting the people at the training since it seemed to me that all of us were on the same page which only rarely happens to me when I come to a new group of people."*), and generally creating a welcoming and hospitable, but also information-rich atmosphere (*"It was simply greatly enriching, getting to know lots of useful information which are not applicable."*). This was true even in cases of health problems in which the group of volunteers was well able to support the members (and even the leaders) who do not feel well at the moment. This is seen by the leaders as an example of *"human connections"* which are genuine and valued as important part of the workcamp.

**Meeting other people engaged in the workcamp process was seen as an important part of the training** as it offered an opportunity to share insecurities and to come together when thinking of sorting out obstacles lying ahead. *"I found out that all of us are a bit afraid of what is ahead of us, but at the same time all of us are looking forward to doing it. (...) This calmed me down, I learned that we will manage to go through it and we will always find solutions."* The group dynamics, despite described as demanding at times by some participants, generally helped to create a positive vibe during the training. *"The training was really cool, I was really afraid of it at the beginning as I did not know any of the other participants, and I did not really know what the training will be concretely about, but I was leaving really excited because I met nice people and the atmosphere there was really cool. Meeting new people, the contents of the training, all of this was enjoyable, and I gained a lot of experience actually."* An important aspect mentioned by some of the participants was also bringing together a group of people which is interested in volunteering, and therefore potentially having similar values and attitudes, and engaging in activities which allow for meeting each other on different levels. *"There were people who wanted to enjoy the training, who are mostly open-minded and understanding to each other, and time was devoted to getting to know each other."* And in the words of another volunteer: *"[The most positive aspect of the training was] the people. My motto is: It is always about people, you can have the best job but if you work with people that don't understand you, it is always a bad choice."* Despite this enthusiasm, keeping in touch with other participants after the end of the training has been scarce even to those participants who voiced their willingness to do so. Some of the respondents noted that it would be beneficial to be supported by the organizers in staying in touch with other participants. Social networks can be used as a tool, but need to be taken care of, and other means of staying in touch can be thought of, such as including activities helping participants of the training to share their contact information with others and identify their own preferred ways of staying

in touch. At the same time, some participants feel that the opportunity to stay in touch was there and if people do not use it, that is simply their own decision which needs to be respected.

In concrete terms, **detailed information and instructions towards the next steps in the workcamp cycle were appreciated by the participants** as these provided good basis for thinking of the upcoming processes and helped the leaders to find their footing in a complex process leading to the workcamps. *“The whole cycle of the workcamps is debated, what needs to be done in advance, during and after the workcamp, and so you can actually imagine what it will be like and how long different stages will take.”* Participants also appreciated examples of real-life situations which occurred in the past in the workcamp settings, as it helped to shed even more light on the workcamps themselves and provided the participants with a deeper insight into what to expect. *“I found that really cool, because I might have not thought of the situation in question that way myself... and then if this were to happen at the workcamp, you can remember talking about it and it might be helpful in solving the real-life situation on the spot.”* Generally, receiving detailed information on all separate aspects of the workcamp experience, such as communication with media, preparations on the spot, communication with the incoming volunteers, organization of time and activities in the workcamp itself, and many other, was seen as extremely important: *“All the things a leader has to prepare before, during, and after the workcamp (administrative part) - now I know what I have to prepare.”*

**Training sessions aiming at improving communication competences of the participants were especially appreciated by the participants.** Session covering basics of nonviolent communication was held, including an interactive part in which young people had a chance to go through communication exercises and try out some of the nonviolent communication procedures via a roleplay. The participants appreciated the overlap between the effective communication and problem-solving areas, giving them some practical tips on how to treat potentially unpleasant or problematic situations: *“[I found the] session on communication and conflict resolution [particularly useful]. I learned how to communicate problems in an effective way and how to attempt to resolve them.”* A media communication was also tackled, providing young people with an overview of a media interview and, again, a chance to try out such interviews via roleplays. *“This I found really interesting even for everyday life – how to communicate in order not to be perceived as attacking someone, how to sort out misunderstandings, how to communicate precisely and share my views or feelings.”* An aspect which was profoundly important to the participants was not only the opportunity to try out new techniques in a roleplay situation, but specifically to be provided with feedback by seasoned leaders. *“We were trying out situations in practice and then we were given feedback. This was a first training ever in which I have received feedback, pointing out the good and the bad things about my performance in such a way that I did not feel bad afterwards. I loved that.”* Moreover, some of the participants took up reading further nonviolent communication books and articles in relation to the introduction made at the training. **Group dynamics also provided participants with an additional opportunity to hone their own communication skills**, with some of the participants taking pride in exhibiting assertive communication styles and defending their opinions in wider debates. In order for the communication to unfold in different settings, the participants mentioned the importance of the time and space for informal conversations during the training.

A very closely linked area of development is the **leadership role the volunteers** are to take up during the workcamps. In this domain, the young people are supported to discover their own approaches,

predispositions, and competences, as is elaborated in the next paragraph. But the participants are also invited to explore the leadership role and develop new competences that enable them to become better leaders: *“The role of a campleader motivates me a lot due to its complexity. It is a challenge to be responsible for coordination of a group of people and to become a friend in this group at the same time. In my opinion, this is a basis for effective group work, that’s why I listed it as a key finding. The need to become an effective facilitator and mediator is the next important task for a campleader.”* Some participants also mention the intersection between the leadership and the participant roles as an important aspect they discovered for themselves: *“A campleader has many responsibilities but in the end, he isn’t that much different from other volunteers. This sets the tone for further communication with the entire group...”* Problem solving, conflict management, and group mediation are also seen as key aspects related to both the communication domain and the leadership role, and this complexity was well highlighted to the participants during the training: *“I will have to be active in my leading position, public speaking, and mediating, communicate myself clearly and confidently to avoid conflicts and misunderstandings.”*

When it comes to the **most important skills developed at the training and applicable not only in the workcamp context, but also in other areas**, communication competences (nonviolent communication, media communication) and concrete non-formal learning activities (icebreakers, energizers, teambuilding activities) were named among the most prominent by the participants. Some participants also emphasize the general personal development as a crucial aspect of the training outcomes. What is also important is the increased awareness of the participants of their own competences. Some of them realized that the leadership role is not as distant as they thought it might be to them (*“I learned that I can be a leader. Being a leader doesn’t mean only to be the alpha, always a proactive person, but also it can mean to be the calm one. Which is more me.”*), others learned important lessons about their social and interpersonal competences (*“[I learned] that I’m after all quite comfortable with social interaction and that my personal boundaries are firmer than I expected and that I stand for them firmly as well.”*), while others unearthed their passion for project work (*“[I learned] that I am better at solving problems than I originally thought and planning projects surprisingly excites me.”*). Interestingly, when asked directly, the workcamp leaders named many of the aforementioned **competences** as **valuable for their future studies or professional life**, specifically stressing the following:

- organizing,
- leading,
- communicating,
- mediating,
- taking up responsibility,
- managing group dynamics, and
- cooperating in a team.

Some of the participants also acknowledged that the training stirred their **thinking about volunteering** as such, prompting them to ask themselves questions related to their further life decisions. *“I started thinking if it is all even OK [the workcamp, note by the researcher]. Fact is that, on one hand, people should be paid for doing work, but on the other hand, I feel myself that sometimes I am more OK with*

*not getting paid, since I feel that I am learning something on the job, and I do not feel so under pressure by responsibility. And overall, I have been thinking of the importance of making lots of money in my life...*" Other aspects of volunteering and communities of volunteers were also explored by the training participants, especially in connection to the common value system of the people attending such events. This is pertinently described by one of our respondents: *"I feel the people there are much more relaxed and that there is a friendly atmosphere, that there is no rivalry, that this makes for a great living space."* These as well as other similar topics which were opened at the training may contribute to strengthening values connected to healthy foundations of democracy: community-based engagements; voluntary and welfare initiatives; and all in all, also a personal engagement in public matters.

**Professionalism of the training organizers was emphasized by some participants**, stressing that their positive attitude, professional and kind communication, as well as a their general friendliness helped make the training into an enjoyable experience: *"The way they spoke to us and the impression they made, that was simply great."* And another participant noted: *"The organizers were patient, polite and sympathetic. They managed to present everything in an interesting and friendly form. They were inspiring."* The supportive nature of the organizers was also noted by the participants, as one of them put it: *"They really helped us a lot, always being there for us, always trying to explain everything."* And all in all, safe learning environment was created for the training participants, and it was well noticed: *"I felt myself in a safe environment as I received all the necessary information for leading a workcamp. I liked the feeling of calm (as any challenge can be solved and now I have key instruments) and motivation (as I was surrounded by amazing ambitious people)."*

Last but not least, **workcamp leaders teamed up and received guidance concerning the upcoming steps leading to the volunteering workcamp**. Workcamps included various topics, such as environmental protection, work with children with special needs, assistance in social care, maintenance of cultural and historical sites, preparation of cultural events, and hosted between eight and fifteen volunteers from all around the world.

As is the case in every human endeavour, even during the training there were **aspects which the participants did not perceive positively**. First and foremost, during the whole training the vegetarian and vegan meals were served which was not perceived well by some participants, most notably by those who had no previous experience with such cuisines. Given the current worldwide climate emergency, avoiding animal products is a reasonable choice in order to lower environmental impacts of the training. Nevertheless, this should be clearly communicated to the participants in order to facilitate their understanding of the meal choices and the reasoning behind them. Such choices can, if not explained properly, be perceived as arbitrary and favouring a certain subgroup of participants (vegetarians and vegans) at the expense of others. Another aspect which left some participants with negative feelings were some of the non-formal learning methods: icebreakers, groupwork-based approaches, and other. This is understandable, since every individual has their limitations when it comes to human contact or the amount of communication they wish to undergo, and to avoid such situations in the future, the basic rule of voluntary participation in all non-formal learning activities should be stressed to the participants. Voluntary participation means that the individual can always opt out of the activities and not take (or stop taking) part if they do not feel comfortable doing so. This does not mean only taking part in activities which are completely comfortable, but to have the way

out in case the activity is simply too much for the person. The participant who opts out from an activity is also not obliged to provide an explanation, unless they feel comfortable doing so, and it requires other participants and organizers to respect such a decision while being supportive and available to help the individual hop back into the programme. Some participants also mentioned “*information overload*”, stressing that a lot of new areas were covered in only two days, making these days demanding. This finding should, however, be complemented by the fact that, when asked, participants underlined that there were no unanswered questions after the training. As a conclusion, it seems that despite being demanding, the training does provide all information participants need in the context of the upcoming workcamps.

#### 4.4. What Experience Did Participants Gain in Further Steps of the Process?

Participants continued preparations for the workcamp and grew gradually into their leadership roles. Among other responsibilities, these were the main aspects of the whole process:

- organizing and implementing an **on-site visit** and establishing contact with the entity hosting the workcamp,
- creating an **introductory document** (so called “Infosheet”) summarizing the main elements of the workcamp and sharing it with the volunteers,
- preparing and publishing a **media release** informing wide public about the workcamp, and
- planning and outlining a **programme of the workcamp** by bringing together volunteering elements, everyday living, and leisure time activities.

Apparently, each of these tasks is a complex one with its own learning potential for the workcamp leaders. Adding on another level of complexity was the process of growing into the leadership roles via gradually **establishing a relationship with the partner of the workcamp leader** (as there are always two workcamp leaders who work as a dyad), via **starting the communication with the volunteers coming to the workcamps**, and via **planning of the timeline preceding the workcamp itself on their own** (the tasks above needed to be done prior to the workcamp implementation with enormous freedom for the workcamp leaders to plan as they see fit). The last aspect – the liberty of setting their own timeline prior to the workcamp – seems to be important in relieving stress and pressure from the workcamp leaders, as well as giving them a sense of control and even easiness of the steps leading to the workcamp itself.

**On-site visit was perceived as a straightforward exercise** by almost all of the participants, leading to a first direct contact with the hosts, and the first in-person visit of the environment in which the workcamp takes place. The on-site visit is also an excellent opportunity for the dyad of workcamp leaders to come together and meet up in person. Despite various levels of details obtained during the on-site visit, a sense of mutual understanding between the important actors (dyad of leaders and the hosts) is established, and overall a much more concrete picture of the upcoming workcamp is obtained by the leaders themselves. *“We had a meeting with the castellan who answered all of our questions, so that was rather easy-going.”*

**Creating documents** related to the workcamp itself (the Infosheet and the media release) **was a more troublesome task for most of the participants**, often demanding careful coordination between the two workcamp leaders on task distribution, fully utilizing experience of each individual. Putting

together texts which are to be publicly available (either among the incoming volunteers or by general public) puts the leaders into a position which may be new to them and brings learning and reflecting opportunities, such as language and stylistic quality of such texts (in both Czech and English) and identifying aims and audiences, and tailoring contents of the texts accordingly. Putting together information about the workcamp also helped the leaders themselves in identifying, answering, or refreshing vital information about their respective workcamps. At the same time, the necessity to look at the workcamp details from the perspective of the incoming volunteers provided welcome insights into the workcamp process for the leaders. For example: describing the workcamp location in such a way so that people from different cultures all understand it and are able to find the spot; identifying information which are vital for the volunteers before arrival and distinguishing them from those which can be shared later during the workcamp itself; and overall creating a welcoming atmosphere for people who often travel long distances to volunteer in the Czech Republic. As one of the leaders puts it: *“When you write an email or an Infosheet, it is necessary to put it together in such a way so that you take into account the fact that the volunteers will be in the Czech Republic for the first time in their lives and they know nothing about the way things work around here. You need to write it in such a way so that it is understandable for all of them, so that they do not get lost in all the information, so that you give them the feeling that they will manage everything alright once they fly in and then travel across the Czech Republic to get to the workcamp itself.”* What the participants found helpful were documents from previous years which were shared with them. In most cases, the documents related directly to the workcamp they were about to attend themselves, at times (e.g., in case of new workcamps), they concerned other workcamps, but in all cases these were seen as a profound help when putting together their own products. Example documents from past years showed them a structure, reminded them of key points which not to forget, and gave general guidance and good practice examples of what is expected. *“I initially thought of writing the documents in a light style with a bit of humour but then I decided to stick to the style of the example documents as I realized that not everyone would, maybe, understand the humorous style.”*

Interestingly, **not much was shared by the research participants on their planning for the workcamp programme**, with most of them suggesting that they will be flexible and adjust the programme to the needs and wishes of the volunteers arriving at the particular workcamp. At the same time, participants seemed to be generally calm when talking of the upcoming workcamps, so the flexibility they demonstrated was not at the expense of their inner peace. The same approach was generally exhibited in **building ties to the other workcamp leader** in the dyad. When the leaders knew each other beforehand, then this aspect is often ignored completely, with participants voicing confidence in their co-leaders. When the leaders came together as the dyad for the workcamp only, geographical distance seemed to play a large role in leaving the relationship-building phase rest until the workcamp itself started, despite acknowledging that not every dyad fit together completely. *“Well, truth be said, my leader partner is not really the best match for me, so that may need some work when we are together, but I see lots of positive attitude from both of us, so I am pretty sure it will work out.”*

All of the leaders also started **communicating with the incoming volunteers**. They used a range of tools to keep in touch, starting with email correspondence through various social network platforms, and even smart phone applications. Apart from sharing the Infosheet with the incoming volunteers, the leaders were also collecting the arrival and departure details and offering help in case volunteers had trouble getting to the workcamp venue or in case other questions arose (e.g., what equipment to

bring, etc.). All of this communication was by some participants seen as a good opportunity to practice their foreign language in written form as well as an opportunity to get a first impression of who is coming for the workcamps.

All in all, **leaders were looking forward to the workcamp** for many reasons. Some were excited to meet new people from all over the world. Others had high expectations from the programme of the workcamp, aiming at learning about an area of human activity new to them (e.g., environmental issues, social care, etc.). Others were looking forward to spending time in an unusual setting, making trips in the free time and generally having fun with other volunteers. And others voiced a wish to share their skills with others (e.g., showing the love for drawing, etc.). At the same time, of course, there were **worries the workcamp leaders expressed** ahead of their workcamp experience. Partners in the leader dyads were for some of them a source of uncertainty, and so were also various unexpected events (problems with health insurance of the volunteers from abroad, possibility of injuries, etc.), and also the leadership role itself: Will I be able to organize everything? Shall we understand each other with the volunteers? Will I be able to catch some time to myself when I need to? These and many other questions were raised by the leaders ahead of their workcamp experience, suggesting that many of them had to come out of their comfort zones to become workcamp leaders.

Last but not least, the **research participants were asked whether they share their experience from the whole process with their peers or families**. A vast majority of the respondents confirmed not only speaking about their experience from the different activities, but also gaining rather positive reactions from their schoolmates, friends, and family members, inspiring some to get interested and potentially apply for the upcoming cycle next year. This sharing contributed, in some cases, not only to promoting the volunteering activities, but also to further learning opportunities when some of the participants were asked about financial matters connected to volunteering, leading to a potential for discussions. An important and repeated reaction to the sharing, as mentioned by the research participants, was also the notion of responsibility: pointing out that the role of a workcamp leader comes with the responsibility the leader is taking up for the whole group of volunteers. *“People told me I was cool to engage in the workcamp, that it seems rather complicated as well as that the position comes with great responsibility and importance for the whole workcamp... but all of them were really positive!”*

#### 4.5. What Experience Did Participants Gain During the Workcamp?

After the workcamps took place during summer months of 2019, a reflection session where camp leaders from three different countries (the Czech Republic, Germany, and Italy) gathered, took place at an environmental centre in the middle of the Moravian Karst in the Czech Republic, in the autumn of 2019. During a weeklong programme, different activities encouraged young people to reflect on their experience as workcamp leaders and share their reflections with other workcamp leaders. Similarly, after the workcamps held during summer of 2021, an international reflection session was held in Germany in the autumn of 2021. In 2021, two concrete research-related reflection activities took place: written reflections which gave individuals a chance to reflect on their own learning paths and outcomes (and from which flipcharts were analysed as data sources); and national reflection session which brought in the aspect of group dynamics and allowed the Czech leaders not only to reflect on their own experience, but also set it into a context of experience of others (and from which

an audio recording was analysed as a data source). Additionally, in 2021, online learning diaries helped record some of the more immediate reflections occurring after the workcamp, but before the final international reflection session in Germany (and these were analysed as well).

All in all, **camp leaders referred very positively to their respective workcamps**. They described a rather relaxed atmosphere with lots of space for fun and informal gatherings which generally created a positive vibe and an enjoyable experience. Mostly welcoming and friendly personalities of the volunteers coming to the workcamps also contributed to the positive atmosphere at the workcamps. One of the workcamp leaders described the most positive aspect of the workcamp to be *“working in a beautiful environment with young, active, hardworking, and fun volunteers”*.

**The leaders described a wide variety of activities which took place during the workcamps**, ranging from manual labour (e.g., the volunteering work itself) through logistical processes (e.g., maintenance of the living quarters, meal preparation, etc.) to leisure time and cultural programme (e.g., field trips, hiking, swimming, playing games, attending cultural festivals, church masses, intergenerational events, etc.). Many of the workcamp activities were specific to a given workcamp. This corresponded to the aims of the particular workcamp and related to the concrete volunteering activities which took place there. The workcamp leaders quoted many examples of **concrete work-related competences** they gained at their workcamps:

- *“I’ve never worked with disabled people before, so everything we’ve been doing was new and necessary to learn.*
- *Yes, [I have learned] about harvesting and milling the herbs, and about their effects on our body.*
- *[I have learned] the extent and volume of landscaping work that was connected to a single estate.*
- *I have learned how to restore old metal objects and how to paint chairs.*
- *We did not learn of sustainability directly, but it was an important part of the camp. We recycled everything and we did not eat meat.”*

Some of the activities, however, even transcended the workcamp itself, for example when the volunteers wrote letters to the workcamp leaders that they only opened after the workcamp was over, as one of the leaders describes: *“[At] the end of the workcamp, all participants wrote us letters which we opened just after we got home. The letters from them were so beautiful, saying they enjoyed the camp very much, thanking me and saying that I was a good leader. It was very touching, and I realised even though the camp was tiring, it was worth it.”*

An important finding links to the wide variety of the abovementioned hands-on activities: **multicompetence development**. When sharing their experience, workcamp leaders revealed that while there are many diverse activities during the workcamp, some related to the programme, some to preparation, and some to the activities outside of the official programme, each of these experiences links to more than one set of competences. Usually, 2 or more different competences have been identified by the workcamp leaders to be developed at the same time. This was best seen in the written reflection exercise, where workcamp leaders first listed the activities which took place during the workcamp, and subsequently linked these activities to their competence development, using a



me to read the mood and divide tasks or know when to give a free day. I learned to work with people of different backgrounds and skills. This is good for a manager work position.”), while others perceive the development in the leadership area to be more of a personal growth (“I’ve learned that I’m strong, that I can be flexible and very friendly. It really helped me to see my role in the world from a different perspective.”), and yet others took the organizational perspective (“The whole workcamp was a really great opportunity for me, to deal with different situations, to react to them quickly, to prepare and deal with money, the amount of work, and the free time schedule.”). Delegating tasks was recognized as an important part of leadership (“[I learned] that leader does not have to do everything, that you could give the job to somebody else to have time to do another job.”), and sharing responsibility was also seen as an important leadership aspect (“[I learned] that a group doesn’t always need a leader, and that a leader sometimes also doesn’t need to lead. That volunteers can help with duties of a leader themselves.”). For others, communication was an important aspect of leadership, as one of them puts it: “[I learned] that I can communicate with people quite well but at the same time there is space for improvement. Communicating as a leader is a bit different than communicating as a participant. As a leader, you have to communicate properly on what you expect from the participants, and you have to explain well what they are to do and what is the purpose of that. I want even more to improve my ability to talk to people and deliver my points [in the future].” Importantly, the leaders felt to be recognized for their role by other volunteers, supporting their own leadership development (“I was a rather quiet and calm leader but at the same time I socialized with the participants, and I was very friendly with them. I think I managed the role as a leader. The participants took me as a leader.”). All of the leaders who shared their views during the 2021 research agree that no matter from what angle they view the leadership competence development, this development definitely is something they consider important for their further educational and professional pathways.

Workcamps are international and intercultural events, and it is not surprising that the workcamp leaders themselves also noticed **competence growth in the intercultural domain**. In some cases, volunteers shared information about their national cultures and hence raised awareness about different habits and realities in different countries (“I learnt daily routines of French volunteers: when they have meals, about their habits, studies.”); on other occasions, the intercultural environment enabled the Czech leaders to reflect on their own culture through the eyes of others (“I saw how people from different cultures see the Czech culture and Czechia which was interesting to me.”); and moreover, it also showed the leaders that some values can transcend the cultural and national borders (“Also, I noticed some opinions are cross-cultural. It did not matter from which countries we came from because we shared the same opinions on the topics.”); and it is these moments when finding shared values and attitudes creates a common living space where volunteers from different cultural backgrounds can enjoy their time together (“Also, I loved that people from different countries would have great time together regardless [of where they come from] and that they accepted their differences with no issues.”).

What proved to be difficult in some of the workcamps was **communication** between the volunteers from abroad and the local inhabitants from the hosting community who often spoke no foreign language at all. Despite the difficulties, at times this proved to be surprising learning moments to some of the participants and members of local communities: “There were some young people from the Czech Children’s Homes [institutional care for children with no next of kin], and they did not really speak much English, but they created strong bonds with the volunteers from abroad anyways. They called it ‘a sign

*language', and it worked wonders."* Managing cooperation among groups using different languages was also part of workcamp leader's experience. The **multilingual environment** dictated the need to assist both the Czechs with poor foreign language skills, and international volunteers with low levels of English, was a must at times.

Apart from the language barrier, cases of occasional friction between the members of the local communities and the volunteers and workcamp leaders were reported, with a necessity to tackle them on the spot by the workcamp leaders themselves. At the same time, differences of opinions among the volunteers or between the volunteers and the workcamp leaders were also reported, although, luckily, none of these negative situations occurred often. **Conflict resolution and mediation** are therefore also competences the workcamp leaders developed during their hands-on workcamp experience.

It should also be noted that the workcamp leaders did not communicate only with the volunteers. They also needed to negotiate (a) with the hosting community as well as (b) with INEX-SDA as the organizing entity, and also (c) with the media in order to inform about the workcamp itself. The **development of the communication competences** hence goes beyond the interpersonal skills, but also encompasses communication in different roles (e.g., a leader, a volunteer, a friend, an official representative of the workcamp, a link between the local community and the organizing entity, etc.), and using various channels, including the official ones. The workcamp leader experience even offers an opportunity to try some specific communication formats such as a live radio interview via a telephone: *"Well, I was walking in circles at the garden to calm myself down at least a little bit [during the live telephone radio interview], but I was incredibly proud of myself afterwards"*.

Nevertheless, these were also the situations in which the leadership competences and strategies of the leaders were put to test, as shown during the reflection sessions, with some workcamp leaders applying direct and top-down approaches and using the leadership authority, while others describing their cooperation with the volunteers as *"spending two weeks with great friends who worked together like they knew each other superbly"*. At this point, the leadership roles crystallized into more concrete and more conscious forms, with some of the leaders explicitly mentioning phrases like *"next time, I will do this a bit differently"* or *"maybe, this I might have tackled otherwise"*. Such explicit reflection suggests that the experience of the workcamp leader role, at least in some cases, was a profound one, creating both leadership competences and a basis for conscious future leadership development.

In connection to the workcamp leadership, the participants also spoke of **overcoming obstacles, being flexible, and dealing with ambiguity**. All of these took up different forms, from practicalities such as managing food supplies or cleanliness of the living quarters, through inter-personal matters such as supporting volunteers with different health issues and including them into the group processes, to negotiating with the different stakeholders during the workcamp itself (e.g., in terms of organizing the volunteer workflow and workload).

It is important to note that an important part of the workcamps that directly connects to the competence development and learning pathways of the leaders, is evaluation and reflection. Workcamp leaders mention the final evaluation, i.e., the process that takes place after each of the workcamps and which includes all volunteers as well as the local host, and the workcamp leader, as important learning moment as it supports reflection of their lived experience. *"Well, you know, at first*

*I thought: 'What will I be writing about in the final evaluation?' But then I started writing and it all poured out of me..."*



*Training of workcamp leaders held by INEX-SDA.*

## 5. Conclusions

The main research question of the 2019 and 2021 INSPIRIT research asked:

What developments can be identified in connection to the 'INSPIRIT programme for young workcamp leaders' in its participants?

In search for answers to the main research question, large volumes of data were collected and analysed, as elaborated above. **To summarize, the INSPIRIT research conducted in 2019 and 2021 with the Czech workcamp leaders shows that developments occur in the following domains:**

- **Leadership competence including:**
  - managerial (i.e., delegating tasks), and
  - organisational (i.e., sharing responsibility).
- **Communication competence including:**
  - mother tongue and foreign language,
  - spoken and written forms,
  - utilizing various communication channels,
  - communicating from different perspectives and roles, and
  - taking into account different audiences.
- **Intercultural competence including:**
  - knowledge on other cultures,
  - reflection of one's own culture,
  - exploration of shared values and intercultural understanding,
  - creation of enjoyable intercultural environment, and
  - operating within a multilingual setting.
- **Social competences including:**
  - conflict resolution and mediation,
  - reflection and understanding of group dynamics,
- **Personal growth including:**
  - overcoming obstacles,
  - flexibility,
  - dealing with ambiguity and uncertainty,
  - reflexivity.
- **Numerous other specific competences such as:**
  - learning to learn,
  - mathematical and technical competence, and
  - practical skills related to the content of the given workcamp.

In order to elaborate on the aforementioned findings, two specific research questions were defined, with the first one asking:

What activities of the INSPIRIT programme can be linked to developments in its participants?

All of the developments in workcamp leaders were connected to a wide variety of concrete activities throughout the whole process of becoming a workcamp leader and beyond, namely through:

- trainings for the workcamp leaders,
- workcamp preparations,
- the international workcamps themselves, and
- the final international reflection sessions.

All of these activities are characterized by the following aspects which allowed the individual workcamp leaders to undergo, form, reflect on, and enjoy their experience:

- **Non-formal learning methods supporting:**
  - getting out of one's comfort zone,
  - safe learning environment,
  - reflection, and
  - fun.
- **Informal learning setting enhancing:**
  - hands-on experience in various areas,
  - real-life setting, and
  - fun.
- **International, multicultural, and multilingual environment stimulating:**
  - cultural reflection,
  - cooperation, and
  - fun.

The learning processes in the workcamp cycle are supported by the three abovementioned main settings: non-formal and informal learning, and international, multicultural, and multilingual environment.

The non-formal learning takes place mostly at the trainings for workcamp leaders and at the final international reflection session, and aims at utilizing zone work (i.e., working on the boundaries of the comfort and stretch zones to enhance learning), reflection (i.e., to transform as much of the learning process into the conscious processes, as possible), and safe environment (i.e., the chance to make mistakes and learn from them without the fear of harsh consequences).

The informal learning takes place during the workcamp preparations and the workcamps as such, and builds on hands-on experience (i.e., the option to try out various activities first-hand), and taking place in a real-life setting (i.e., the lived experience of engaging in activities with real-world connection and consequences).

The international, multicultural, and multilingual environment can be found in the workcamp itself and in the final international reflection session, and builds on cultural reflection (i.e., the opportunity to review one's own values in contrast to those of others), and cooperation (i.e., the need to get along with people from different backgrounds).

An element which is common to all abovementioned aspects is fun. Throughout the whole workcamp cycle, young people enjoy themselves, enjoy the company of others, and strive to have as much fun as possible while engaging in the volunteering, non-formal learning, or informal learning activities.

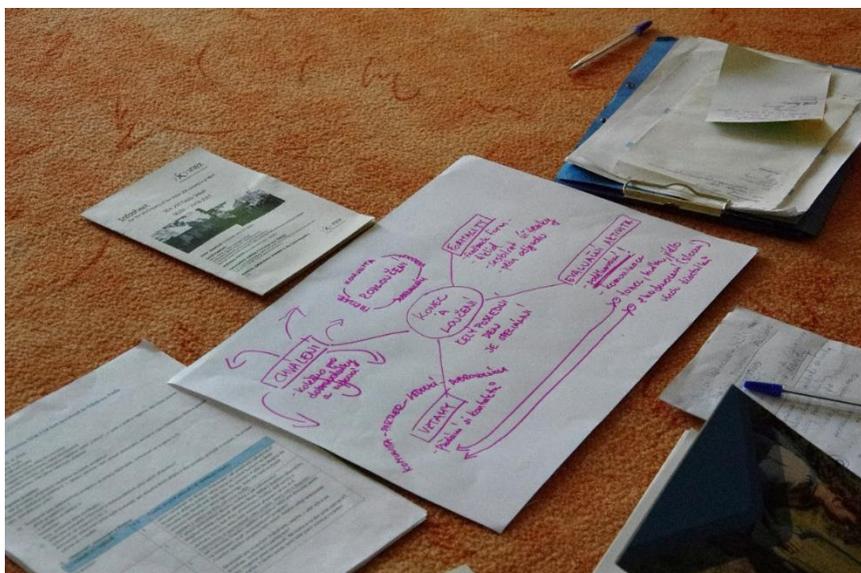
Lastly, a specific research question asked for a connection between the developments in workcamp leaders and their professional contexts, as follows:

What developments in INSPIRIT programme participants can be linked to their professional lives (study and/or work)?

Overall, the workcamp leaders **recognized on the individual level** that the competence development they have undergone is applicable across various contexts: in their private lives, as well as in further education and training, and in their future professional careers.

Unfortunately, when it comes to **the official recognition** of the whole experience, the situation across universities differs widely and it is not possible to track all official forms of recognition of the workcamp leader experience for the young people. In some cases, young people had an opportunity to recognize the experience as part of their studies in a form of an internship. The number of ECTS, again, varies across the study fields as well as across faculties and universities.

As for **the social recognition**, young people shared their experience both in their peer context and in their families and overall received encouragements and positive feedback for their efforts. There is not enough data on the hosting community impacts but given the fact that many of the workcamps take place repeatedly, it can be assumed the hosting community is impacted in a positive way as well.



*Preparations of non-formal learning activities.*

## 6. Recommendations

Based on the findings from this research and on the conclusions above, series of recommendations are provided below to support future development of the workcamp leaders' cycle and its cooperation with the university sector.

### Use findings from this research to promote workcamp leaders' cycle as a valued internship opportunity for university students.

As this research shows, the advantages of taking part in the workcamp cycle are enormous. Multicompetence development coupled with fun and meaningful volunteering activities is a powerful mix of learning opportunities, pleasantly spent time, and public engagement. Moreover, using the workcamp cycle as an internship opportunity opens up doors to university students not only to undergo a positive learning experience, help local communities, and meet people from all over the globe, but also gain ECTS and fulfil a study obligation.

### Use motivations of the workcamp leaders explored in this research to promote workcamp engagement of university students.

University students have various motivations when entering the workcamp cycle, and all of them are fulfilled during their participation. These are, among others, meeting new people from all over the globe, gaining leadership experience, develop competences, use the workcamp cycle as an internship opportunity, and to have fun. Using all of these motivations as strengths when presenting the workcamp cycle at universities can boost student interest in taking part. Last but not least, try matching workcamp content with the study domain of the student to make the workcamp even more appealing (e.g., students of history may appreciate workcamps located at castles, while students of social work may be interested to work with young people from disadvantaged backgrounds).

### Outline further learning opportunities during the training and reflection activities.

There hardly ever is time to cover all aspects of different topics that the workcamp leaders would be interested in (e.g., of non-violent communication, group dynamics, or leadership styles), and it is vital that the learning transcends the workcamp cycle and can be followed-up by the leaders in their own time. This can easily be done by providing further resources during each learning session (e.g., papers, books, podcasts, videos, etc.), as well as outlining further learning opportunities to use (e.g., MOOCs, Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps workshops and volunteering opportunities, etc.), or generally where to look for further similar learning experiences (e.g., the European Youth Portal, the Eurodesk website, the national youth information infrastructure, etc.).

### Focus reflection sessions during the whole workcamp leaders' cycle also on transferability of learning outcomes.

Be it competence development, knowledge gains, or attitude shifts, workcamp leaders should also be conscious about how these are or can be transferred to other spheres of life: to further education, training, or career. Making the transferability part of reflection sessions will ensure that they are not only aware of their learning pathways but are also actively able to utilize them in their further lives, most notably when proceeding through education and when entering the labour market.

### Make sustainability an explicit theme across all workcamp leaders' cycle activities.

Firstly, sustainability should be tackled across the board in the whole workcamp cycle, with appropriate measures to be implemented on all occasions. Secondly, the participants need to be aware of these measures and their connection to the sustainability. While vegan meals are definitely one of the most effective tools to decrease the environmental impacts of any trainings or workcamps, it is necessary to be explicit about the role of this tool in order to (a) raise awareness of the sustainability as such, and (b) to ensure that a common understanding is created. At the same time, the workcamp leaders should have a ready-made tool to ensure the workcamps they will be implementing are as sustainable as possible. This can be done through various checklists (e.g., the one by Tuménaité [2021]), or through specific training activities.

### Help workcamp leaders to stay in touch with each other.

The workcamp cycle builds, to a large extent, on group dynamics and group experience which supports the individual development. This aspect of shared experience can be further boosted by creating opportunities and channels which enable the leaders to stay in touch with each other even after the events are over. This can materialize as social network channels, facilitation of direct contact sharing, newsletter, or even as an alumni network for those leaders who have successfully undergone all of the activities. An alumni network can create a basis not only for shared learning, but also can create an added value to the whole process, an opportunity for PR activities, building of traditions, and staying in touch. Yearly alumni network meetings can easily be seen as an added value of the workcamp cycle and an incentive to take part.



*Training of workcamp leaders held by INEX-SDA.*

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*Developments in International  
Volunteer Workcamp Leaders in  
Germany*

*INSPIRIT Project: German National Research  
Report*

*2019 & 2021*

*NADDAF, Zijad*

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*Cologne, Germany, 2021*

*Coordinated by IBG Stuttgart*

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## Introductory Remarks

INSPIRIT project provided a chance to shed more light on the experience of young people who undertake a specific volunteering task: leading an international volunteering workcamp. Such young people, it may be presumed, are undergoing a specific and potentially enriching learning experience. The role of a volunteering workcamp leader, moreover, is extending the common international volunteering framework by adding an element of leadership and an element of deliberate and institutionalized learning opportunities. Young people who decide to devote their time to the workcamp leader experience engage in a year-long programme which includes a training part as well as reflection sessions. All of these opportunities are prepared and organized by „Internationale Begegnung in Gemeinschaftsdiensten e.V.“, IBG in short, is a German NGO founded in 1965. IBG is one of around a dozen organizations in Germany who identify themselves as workcamp organizations. All those organizations are registered and non-profit associations in Germany and have joined forces in the "*Trägerkonferenz der Internationalen Jugendgemeinschafts- und Sozialdienste*"<sup>4</sup> (translates to Bearers' Conference of International Youth Community and Youth Social Services Organizations) to pool their interests and develop common quality standards. The purpose of the Bearers' Conference is to represent the common interests of workcamp organizations vis-à-vis the Federal Republic of Germany. It brings together the existing competences and enables a structured dialogue with the Federal Ministry of Youth (BMFSFJ) on the further development of the services and their promotion. For more details see the Czech report.

This report is divided into two larger sections. Part I comprises the report of the scientific monitoring from the year 2019. Part II describes the evaluated results of the data collected in 2021. The results in Part I and Part II are preceded by an introductory chapter outlining international youth work in Germany (Chapter 1), a section on the international volunteer workcamp leader's cycle (Chapter 2) and a methodology section (Chapter 3).

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.workcamps.org/organisationen>

## 1. International youth work in Germany

The field of practice and theory of international youth work in the Federal Republic of Germany has been developing since the 1950s and has differentiated until today. Parallel to the practice, an interdisciplinary theory and research discourse has been established, which is oriented in particular towards psychological exchange research (Thomas/Chang/Abt 2007) and socio-educational youth work research (cf. e.g. Thimmel/Chehata 2015).

The term "international youth work" has a narrow and a broad meaning. In the narrow meaning, it refers to all adolescents and young adults as addressees, analogous to the legally codified term of youth work used in specialist research. This is clearly formulated in § 11 of the Child and Youth Welfare Act (KJHG)/Social Code (SGB VIII) and is widely accepted in the professional discussion of youth work research. The aim of the activities is to promote young people through educational arrangements in the non-formal education sector, to enable community and leisure time as well as participation and youth political engagement. Firstly, youth support and the corresponding structure of services refer to all children, adolescents and young adults regardless of social, integration, inclusion and educational policy criteria and "constructions", e.g. of neediness or of the structural or individual facts of disadvantage of the addressees. Secondly and at the same time, youth work is committed to the concept of access justice, participation and equal opportunities for young people from all milieus, which is why the hidden financial, structural or cultural and milieu-specific access barriers to the offers in the non-formal sector are criticised. Initiatives to expand the participation of hitherto underrepresented groups in the offers of the non-formal education sector and to politically represent the interests of this field vis-à-vis the formal sector are a current challenge. Constitutive is the conceptual requirement of voluntary participation and the aspect of participation. Youth work science and research assume that youth work is a third socialisation instance besides parents and school, which can support young people on their way into democratic society and in their personality development. Youth work thus has a mandate as part of the provision of public services. Youth work is differentiated into the fields of youth education, youth association work and open youth work as well as into the fields of cultural youth education, political youth education, media and experiential education (Hafeneger 2011). Although the boundaries between youth work and youth social work are fluid on the one hand, the differences in terms of funding and structure must be taken into account on the other. The central difference between youth work and youth social work refers to the different funding, administrative allocation, carrier structure as well as the fundamental target group specificity (disadvantage) and compensatory justification of youth social work. This results from the formulation in § 13 SGB VIII and the respective Land implementation laws. On the conceptual and methodological level, the commonalities in international youth work are to be emphasised in particular, also because the difference between youth work and youth social work has no counterpart in other countries due to the German structure of institutions and funding regulations. Accordingly, the term "youth work" is used in European discourse for both fields.

Children's and youth travel is an independent practical and theoretical field of youth work. (In the KJHG / SGB VIII this is subsumed in the indent of children's and youth recreation and differentiated differently in the implementation laws of the federal states). Youth trips can be classified as international youth work - irrespective of the question of funding - if the youth educational practice consciously encourages bi- or international learning and educational processes and leads to encounters with young people from other countries. The concept of the mobility puzzle by Andreas Thimmel is a model of a synopsis of the different formats of international activities, which makes it possible from an individual point of view to draw connections and bridges between one's own international experiences and at the same time can be seen as an invitation to offer young people and

young adults a wide range of international leisure and educational experiences and to inform them and their guardians about the multitude of offers.

In addition to the narrow meaning described above, international youth work in its broad interpretation refers to the international activities in other fields of pedagogical work with young people within the framework of youth welfare. This includes youth social work, which is concerned with the integration of structurally or individually disadvantaged young people into the labour market, as well as educational assistance, whose mandate is to provide intensive support to young people in the process of growing up, for example in residential groups or other inpatient facilities. Another area is volunteer services abroad. International youth work in its broad meaning also refers to the bi- or multinational experiences of voluntary and full-time professionals in child and youth welfare, i.e. activities that are subsumed under the keywords exchange of professionals or peer learning.

The necessity of separating the narrow and broad meaning of international youth work results from the different legal foundations and the structuring of the field based on them. The necessity of the technical use of both readings - and thus also a certain ambiguity - follows the administrative use of the term international youth work:

The narrow formulation follows the regulation in the legal text of SGB VIII and in the Child and Youth Plan of the Federation (as an implementing law for SGB VIII). The broad formulation is based on the Federal Child and Youth Plan (KJP):

*"In all fields of action of child and youth welfare, the agencies should therefore offer young people and professionals opportunities to experience Europeanisation and globalisation processes and to deal with them in a differentiated way. (...) European and international youth work should be further developed in order to give all young people access to cross-border learning experiences. (...) European and international youth work is an integral part of child and youth welfare." 5*

The guiding goals of child and youth welfare in the mission statement go on to say:

*"The KJP is intended to promote European and international youth work by child and youth welfare organisations and their associations at federal level in the form of child and youth encounters and specialist programmes as well as the corresponding information and necessary infrastructure. The child and youth welfare organisations should increasingly introduce those young people in Germany to international projects who otherwise have hardly any opportunities for such experiences. For young people and professionals in child and youth welfare, access to international forms of encounter should be improved and obstacles removed." 6*

This means that international youth work is a designated area of youth work in the KJP (narrow definition) and at the same time a cross-sectional task of child and youth welfare in the mission statement (broad definition), which refers both to the addressees of youth welfare and to the professionals. Based on the broad definition, the following areas can be distinguished: (1) group

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<sup>5</sup> Vgl.: <https://www.bmfsfj.de/blob/111964/2f7ae557daa0d2d8fe78f8a3f9569f21/richtlinien-kjp-2017-data.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Vgl.: [https://www.jurion.de/gesetze/kjp\\_rl-1/anlage\\_1/](https://www.jurion.de/gesetze/kjp_rl-1/anlage_1/)

exchanges or youth encounters within the framework of youth work, (2) youth policy cooperation of youth organisations, (3) international activities in the fields of youth social work and educational assistance, (4) volunteering abroad as an interface activity between youth welfare and engagement policy, and (5) exchanges of professionals within the framework of child and youth welfare, which refer to all fields of child and youth welfare.

In international youth work in the narrower sense, the following activities for young people can be distinguished: Bi-, tri- and multinational activities, thematically oriented trips abroad with an encounter character, work camps as well as innovative international projects. The sponsors of the activities are youth associations, youth groups, public youth welfare organisations, youth education organisations, youth education centres, political and cultural youth education organisations, associations and other non-profit sponsors as well as organisations specialised in international youth work and non-governmental organisations. The non-profit exchange organisations, which are grouped together in the AJA (Arbeitskreis gemeinnütziger Jugendaustauschorganisationen - Working Group of Non-profit Youth Exchange Organisations), have a specific significance in the field: on the one hand, they organise individual exchanges in the field of long-term student exchanges and thus operate in the field of schools; on the other hand, however, they are to be regarded as a type of organisation with their own profile due to the national and international group activities of volunteers from different countries and their efforts in the field of non-formal international education and encounter work.

As a rule - in relation to the publicly funded format - due to the valid funding guidelines, the principle of return encounters applies in relation to the participating groups, not necessarily in relation to the individual young people. The young adults learn together in heterogeneous groups, they work on common topics, live together and spend their free time together. "Together" also includes intermittent, conceptually based communication in monolingual groups.

In the case of an education-related stay in another country, the foreign perspective refers either in the sense of binationality to a partner or host country in Europe or to specific countries worldwide. In the field of multinationally conceived international youth work (Erasmus + Youth in Action), the countries of the European Union and so-called partner countries are the framework. In the European context, the term youth mobility has been established since around 2005. In the context of opening up the activities of "weltwärts" - the programme format of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development - to group-related youth exchanges, the focus has also been on exchanges with countries in Africa and the Global South for a few years now.

Conceptual and financial framework conditions result from the following regulations: The Child and Youth Plan of the federal government, the guidelines of the federal states and municipalities (state youth plans and municipal youth plans), the Erasmus + Youth in Action programme of the EU and the statutes of the binational youth organisations (German-French Youth Office and German-Polish Youth Office). The status of international youth work varies greatly in the individual municipalities and Länder.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. the information on a federal state basis from the Child and Youth Welfare Statistics as well as the efforts to empirically record the activities of the IJA in the project "Mobility Report". There is no empirical data at the level of the municipalities and districts.

In recent years, the funding of activities by private foundations has increased. They are theoretically less committed to certain formats.

Most recently, the Access Study on International Youth Work proposed a systematisation of formats of organised stays abroad (Becker/Thimmel 2019). This systematisation distinguishes between formats in which young people travel individually or in groups and between formats that are carried out in the context of formal or non-formal and informal education. The access study proposes a core area of international youth exchange that includes individual student exchanges and internships abroad (vocational training) in the context of formal education, as well as group-based student exchanges. The core area of international youth exchanges also includes the formats organised in a non-formal context, these are the voluntary service (individual) as well as international youth encounters and the important format of work camps (group-related).<sup>8</sup>

## 2. Brief Description of the Volunteer Workcamp Leaders' Cycle

International volunteer workcamp leader is a role in which young people devote their time to organizing and leading various voluntary welfare projects in a certain country. The voluntary welfare projects are attended by volunteers from all over the world and the international volunteer workcamp leader is expected not only to prepare the project to run smoothly, but also to overlook the welfare project implementation directly on the spot. The workcamps organized by IBG are usually held for two or three weeks and have a clearly defined framework and goals in order to attract such volunteers and leaders who are interested in the topic. Topics of the international volunteer workcamps vary from landscape & nature conservation, renovation & preservation maintenance of local heritage or youth facilities, through organizing cultural events, to supporting vulnerable people and inclusive projects.

Apparently, the abovementioned process is a rather complex one, and certain stages can be identified in the cycle of an international volunteer workcamp leader. In summary, these stages include:

- 7) Planning the yearly cycle.
- 8) Recruiting the workcamp leaders.
- 9) Holding a training for the workcamp leaders.
- 10) Preparing the workcamps.
- 11) Implementing the workcamps.
- 12) Reflecting on the workcamps.

First and foremost, each year a **planning of the workcamps** and related events takes place. In Germany, IBG takes on this role, surveying the terrain with a general focus on the southern part of Germany, putting together a list of workcamps, evaluating their welfare impact, making sure contact persons are available in each of the selected workcamps, and planning activities for the future workcamp leaders. The aim of this phase is to prepare all necessary background materials to attract future workcamp leaders and to take further steps.

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<sup>8</sup> Vgl. <https://www.zugangsstudie.de/2089-2/>

Subsequently, potential workcamp leaders are recruited via open calls, specific publications and various kinds of recruitment events taking place at different locations in Germany or (increasingly more) online. Again, IBG is the main actor in this phase, aiming at establishing a pool of young people who are invited to future activities and prepared for their role of an international volunteer workcamp leader. Young people are informed of all future steps along the way and asked to sign up for one of the two trainings that are typically organized between April and June in order to prepare them for their role of the workcamp leaders.

At the **training for workcamp leaders**, all details of preparation and implementation of international volunteer workcamps are outlined, young people have a chance to meet other workcamp leaders (some of whom they will work very closely with), get acquainted with the whole process leading to their workcamp experience, have a chance to deal with questions and set their expectations in line with reality, and generally gain ownership of the whole process. The training is usually held during one weekend and engages a range of non-formal learning techniques to cover a wide range of areas connected to the workcamps and the role of the leaders. As shown above, there are numerous goals of this activity, but the main ones can be summarized as follows:

- To provide young people with a holistic picture of what is expected of them as workcamp leaders;
- To identify workcamp leaders with take the lead on particular workcamps;
- To match workcamp leaders with their partners in order to establish dyads working together at each of the workcamps.

When workcamp leaders team up and learn details of the upcoming process, the work of the workcamp leaders starts by preparing the workcamps. This preparatory phase is jointly designed by the workcamp leaders and IBG in a closely coordinated process and lasts between several weeks and up to 4 months. The workcamp leaders jointly organise the preparatory communication with the local cooperation partner in order to discuss all details and practical aspects with the workcamp hosts. A preparatory visit is often difficult to realise, so the personal meeting of leaders and hosts on site is usually shifted to the one or two days before the start of the workcamp that the leaders arrive earlier. Media communication is set up to inform the public about the workcamp; and preparation materials are prepared and sent to the volunteers themselves, and the workcamp leaders also contact the participants to introduce themselves and help with the arrival logistics of the participants.

Eventually, the workcamps themselves start, with the leaders arriving ahead of the other participating volunteers in order to prepare necessities on the spot. Once the other volunteers arrive, the workcamp leaders work with them towards the goals of the particular workcamp, organizing also leisure time activities, communicating with the local hosts, and overall ensuring a smooth running of the whole workcamp. Workcamps typically last between two and three weeks and are usually held at one place with no need for relocations.

After the workcamp implementation phase is over, the leaders and the volunteers leave for home, the **reflection stage** begins. Starting on the individual level, each of the leaders has time to reflect on their respective experience in the workcamp and prepares a workcamp report according to a template provided by IBG. The report is either prepared individually by each leader or together by the matched

up leaders. At the end of the workcamp season end of September / beginning of October, an international group reflection is organized to help support the reflection process. At that point, the workcamp leaders have a chance to come together with their peers who undertook the same role at different workcamps, and even with workcamp leaders from other countries. Group reflection aims at sharing experience from the workcamps on both formal and informal platforms over a course of a few days, aiming at supporting the reflection processes of the individuals as well as supporting conscious assessment of learning outcomes in individuals.

All in all, the cycle of the international volunteer workcamp leaders is approximately six months, with the start of the whole process during the spring, the workcamp itself implemented in summer months, and the final reflection session held in autumn of a given year.

### 3. Methodology 2019 & 2020

The aim of the INSPIRIT research project is to provide evidence of positive developments in participants of workcamp leadership training activities in order to support universities' decision to include these courses in their own curricula.

The main research question in 2019 was as follows:

- *What developments can be identified in relation to the "INSPIRIT programme for young workcamp leaders" among participants?*

In 2020, there was also another specific research question:

- *Which developments in the participants of the INSPIRIT programme can be linked to their professional life (studies and/or work)?*

With a view to the individual questions of the research project and in order to make it possible to describe a possible development process among the participants, pre- and post-interviews were conducted with participants of the project. In 2019, two survey phases took place, for each of which different interview guidelines were developed. The pre-interviews took place at the beginning of the participants' activities and before the training sessions in Fornsbach. They were conducted by telephone. Central to this first interview was to find out who the participants of the camp leadership training are, what their expectations of the training are and what factors motivated them to participate in the project. Furthermore, it was also about being able to assess their previous experiences in the field of volunteer activities. The follow-up interviews took place after the individual camp leaders had completed their training. They were partly conducted in person at the reflection meeting in Brno and partly by telephone after the project activities. The focus of the follow-up interviews included capturing the experiences and results of the training activity in Fornsbach as well as obtaining assessments and experiences of the participants in the context of the independently conducted work camps. In retrospective and in comparison to the preliminary interviews, it became possible to outline the overall process of the activities and possible effects on the participants. From the data-rich material, such crystallisation points were worked out in the analysis, in which the interview participants reflect on educational processes, describe challenges or, generally speaking, describe moments that are important to them.

A total of ten interviews could be realised: six interviews took place before and four interviews after the activities. The interview participants were between 20 and early 30s at the time of the interview.

In order to answer the research questions for the year 2021, the participants' learning diaries were evaluated. The participants had a total of two learning diaries at their disposal: On the one hand, the participants reflected on their experiences in the work camp training. The learning diary for the work camp training was available to them for this purpose (DWT). On the other hand, they were supposed to document their impressions, among other things, with regard to the leadership function they assumed in the following work camp. They could use another learning diary for this (DWC).

Not all participants forwarded their learning diaries to the IBG for evaluation. A total of 10 learning diaries from 5 participants were included in the analysis.

Under pedagogical guidance, the participants were asked to reflect on and write down all their experiences from the training and the work camp in an evaluation round at the end of the project. In a second step, they were to assign their activities to certain competences: For this purpose, they were provided with a grid consisting of a total of eight superordinate areas: 1) Communication; 2) Learning to learn, 3) Mathematical/Technical, 4) Leadership, 5) Relationship; 6) Management and 7) Cultural Awareness. These so-called written reflections were also evaluated for this report and used as examples at one point or another for clarification.

Both the learning diaries and the interviews were analysed with the help of qualitative content analysis (Mayring 2010).

## Part I

„I will continue to do this in my life. It will be a part of my life.“  
(Interviewee in interview)

### 4. Research Results 2019

The following section presents the central results of the interviews. The relevant recurring themes in the interviews are not differentiated according to the survey phase. Rather, the aim is to present an overall view. For this purpose, the contents of the preliminary interviews and the follow-up interviews were brought together in a systematised, thematically ordered form.

First, the persons who participated in the work camp training will be described and their experiences with volunteering activities will be presented. Then, a more detailed section will highlight the very different reasons for participating in the project. The statements on this were very complex and include many individual aspects that, from the research perspective, are expressions of educational processes in non-formal settings. In this context, it has been important to address the group experiences.

Another section following this introductory discussion will deal with the experiences in the training in Fornsbach. The last phase of the project was about the participants running a work camp on their own in order to have the opportunity to try out and implement the aspects learned in Fornsbach. Therefore, Part I of the report will conclude by describing those moments that were subsequently reflected by the interviewees as the most important learning moments.

#### 4.1. Which people volunteer?

When conducting the interviews, it became clear that the participants are a socio-economically quite privileged group of young people. On the one hand, this can be seen in the way the interviewees talk about their lives and their experiences so far in the field of volunteering. At the same time, a relatively high level of education can be assumed: The participants in the activities are students who - this can be inferred from individual interview passages - have time for leisure or take the time for voluntary activities. Generally speaking, they are interested in getting involved in society in their free time. In addition, they express and reflect on their social commitment, their goals and values, their life plans and perspectives in concrete terms during the interviews. It is consistently important to the interviewees to contribute to society, to reflect on themselves and their own position in society. That they are aware of their privileged status is also evident in the interviews. One person reports on the group dynamics and the interaction with each other as follows:

*„I think it's a very pleasant group. But it's also a bit like we live in a bubble here. There is a category of people here, I think, who want to run a camp or go on a work camp. They are all very open-minded people, open to other cultures, nobody is right-wing. Yes, well, you can tell that there really is a certain group from society here. (Interviewee in interview)*

The intercultural, the exchange with others, acting and negotiating in groups are thematic references they refer to in the conversations. Topics such as social injustice, human rights and racism, diversity and gender, ecology and sustainability give them orientation in life and are valuable to them. For all interviewees, the high level of social commitment that they represent and by which they partly orientate their lives is abundantly clear. What the interviewees have in common is an interest in

personal development and a desire to learn and gain experience. One person formulated this in the interview as follows:

*„And I like meeting new people in general. I also like getting to know people from other cultures because I think it enriches my own life a bit, or I've often taken things with me through school exchange things and so on.“ (Interviewee in interview)*

#### 4.2. Experience of volunteering and voluntary activities

All interview participants have already had at least one experience of an individual or group format abroad. Most of the interviewees have already participated in such a format more than once. For the interviewees, it seems to make sense to combine an organised encounter with their studies in terms of time; in some cases, such experiences had already taken place in their school days (voluntary activities) or in their childhood (here, however, holidays/non-organised, pedagogically accompanied format). When describing experiences with voluntary activities, volunteering or even travelling, the above-mentioned committed basic attitude of the interviewees is again evident: travelling is often a topic in their lives from a young age. One interviewee reports that she spent part of her childhood abroad. She estimates that she has an affinity to international topics because of this. One respondent reports that she had her first experience of volunteering at the age of 14. These relatively early experiences often came about through church organisations. Another interviewee had accompanied a leisure time for people with disabilities before the IBG activities. The same person also co-facilitated a café for refugees. An important experience that the participating interviewees have had also seems to be the (group and individual) student exchange or internship. According to one interviewee, there was a central moment, an important moment in life, which was decisive for further engagement. For example, it was reported that an internship in Egypt was the initiation for the interest in foreign countries and for dealing with intercultural aspects.

*„So, I think the internship in Egypt was also a bit of a deciding factor. I had never been outside of Europe before, and perhaps I was still a bit shy about going abroad on my own, to a larger country. And I think the stay shook me up a bit and showed me: 'OK, you can also do this on your own, in an international context'. And that's why I think that was the decisive point where I said: OK, I want to do more international things.“ (Interviewee in interview).*

The descriptions of the experiences and activities of the interviewees in the interviews indicate that voluntary activities and social engagement are experienced as biographical companions. The engagement represented here is embedded in the biographies and life plans of the young people. It is a relevant aspect in their lives, which - according to the thesis formulated here - is taken for granted and is part of the interviewees' self-image.

#### 4.3. Reasons for participating in the project

Following the participants' reflection processes described above, the interviews suggest that a central motive for participating in the project is the expectation of stimulating self-education processes. In this context, one interviewee describes:

*„I actually find it interesting to observe myself acting in new groups, because it is very different from people at university whom I have known for a very long time“.*  
(Interviewee in interview)

The reasons for participating in the project can be subsumed under four areas: <sup>9</sup>

(1) Methodological competence: The first category includes all those expectations of the respondents that have to do with learning and expanding methodological competences. The relevance of methodological competence is often formulated. According to the interviewees, it is important to learn or further develop suitable methods for guiding and moderating groups.

*"Yes, just to get to know these new methods, maybe to get to know myself, to try them out, to see: 'Is that something for me?' (Interviewee in interview)*

Two aspects are interesting here: (1) The respondents strongly differentiate the methodological competences they develop and learn in the non-formal field from their studies. They construct a difference between theory and practice. This becomes particularly obvious when they present the work camps as a balance to their (theory-heavy) studies.

*"In my studies, everything is super theoretical and I kind of sit around in an office or on a chair at a table at my computer all day. And I find that it also somehow grounds you a bit when you somehow build something yourself or create something and see a result at the end or see how much work it is". (interviewee in interview)*

This shows that joint action is understood as "grounding" and is connected with the experience of "having done something". At the end of the activities there is a common product. Embedded in this practice, however, is also the desire to experience a shared space of experience with other people.

*"And on a level that is not just dry theory, but that makes it possible for people to experience it for themselves, so to speak, which I think is really cool, exactly".*  
(Interviewee in interview)

In addition to this aspect, a second interesting factor can be found in the respondents' accounts (2). The competences acquired in the work camp are experienced in a practical way. They are understood as something that can be grasped very concretely and is useful. Thus, the soft skills learned in the work camp have a similar meaning for the participants as the certificate of achievement in mathematics studies or the grade in a German course. The participants describe their experiences and personal developments in a very concrete and tangible way.

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. also the written reflections outlined in Part II with regard to the variety of competences and educational moments learnt.

*"But the main thing is to learn some practical things that I can then use when I lead groups. (Interviewee in interview)*

(2) Expectations of competence development: Overall, the participants' expectations in terms of learning and experience are very high. The work camps are perceived as an enrichment of one's life through structured, guided learning (of leadership skills). For example, one person reported that they could use what they learned in the camps well for their later career and that the experiences were very decisive for their future life (professionally, but also privately). The interviewees emphasised that the skills they had learned were not only particularly useful if they were later to take up a profession in the social sector. Rather, they are of the opinion that the competences learned in the work camp, the shared experiences and the common reflection are relevant for any professional career.

Furthermore, the interviews show that the participants are also interested in getting to know the organisation of work camps, for example, taking responsibility in the areas of financing and budgeting for work camps, shopping and housekeeping, etc.. They are also interested in the structural and administrative contexts and organisational processes.

(3) Group dynamics: Under this category, those aspects were included in which it is learned (and practically experienced) how group processes and group dynamics are structured. Participants in the interviews consistently describe how important it is for work camp leaders to understand group patterns, group processes and role distributions. Learning about group phases and structures is essentially related to methodological competences. Another relevant learning moment that emerges in the discussions with participants is the reflection on group-related processes. According to the interview participants, leading group-related activities also requires knowledge of (method-based) conflict resolution strategies. All these practically learned methods are supposed to serve the competence to act in decision-making.

In addition to the aspects of processes and structures mentioned, the relevance of one's own standing within the group, as formulated by the interviewees, can also be subsumed under the category of group dynamics. Thus, the participants who were interviewed are often concerned with gaining security in the group, gaining more security in leading groups and thus implicitly above all with reflecting on their own position in the group and being able to take responsibility for it.

*„And I found it quite fascinating how the groups come together and then find their roles. (...) Exactly, because with each group, depending on the people in it (...) you see how you can shape yourself (...) until you have found each other and then finally the roles are somewhere in a group. Well, they change a bit over time anyway, the roles. But I always find that very exciting". (Interviewee in interview)*

The focus of the work camp training is thus, among other things - this could be a thesis - the group context, acting together and creating group cohesion as well as the participants' sense of community and belonging. If you look at the literature on international youth encounters and general youth work, of which it is a part, you will also find these principles there. It is about enabling spaces for educational processes, it is about organising leisure time and about subjects who understand and position themselves in relation to their environment.

The interviewed participants emphasise that the positive sense of community as well as the learning of skills is largely due to the competence of the IBG staff. Already after the kick-off meeting, one interviewee described this:

*„And I also think it's cool that especially the leaders here now bring in many different things from which you can also learn a lot yourself, in the sense that you can perhaps also use the method or the game. I think that's pretty cool.  
(Interviewee in interview)*

(4) Design and negotiation processes: If the experiences in the work camps are understood as enabling spaces for shaping and negotiating, numerous indications can be found in the interviews that the participants also draw their motivation from the experience of shared leisure time and the shaping of these action spaces.

*"That the [project] is a platform or a space where everyone can try things out in their own way and maybe not everyone does it the same way, maybe not equally well, but just in their own way". (Interviewee in interview)*

The participants who were interviewed emphasised that as a group leader one needs to be particularly sensitive to the group processes. However, this is a skill that takes place in cooperation. Accordingly, it is important to involve all persons in the group and - if possible - to create a "win-win situation". In this context, one person describes:

*"And it was very important to me that I personally benefit from it, but also the people on site. So that it really is a win-win situation." (interviewee in interview)*

The design of negotiation spaces, the inclusion of the individual group participants as well as sensitivity to group dynamics are, as already mentioned, certainly topics that form the principles of international exchange and encounter. Group design processes are thereby a product of the capacity of each individual person in the group. The interviewees assume that these specific skills can be learned in the IBG's work camp leadership training. They see the IBG work camp leadership training as a space for trying out skills and behaviour in groups. They develop their leadership skills in this space. They also want to use the experience they gain to orient themselves professionally.

#### 4.4. Group experiences

The participants interviewed all had positive group experiences during the kick-off meeting and the training in Fornsbach. Due to relatively similar motivations and interests, the interviewed participants feel a high level of group cohesion. According to the interviews, group cohesion seems to increase continuously in the course of the project process. There seems to be a high tolerance of ambiguity and an acceptance of individual behaviour, attitudes and lifestyles.

*"But a lot of people get along well and it's just a relaxed atmosphere and you don't have to be afraid somehow, I don't know, of saying something or being judged somehow". (interviewee in interview)*

According to the interviewees, the project concept also contributes to the positive group experiences and the possible individual positioning within the group. In this context, one interviewee describes the

relevance of the balance between group phases on the one hand and the guarantee of free spaces and opportunities for retreat on the other.

*"And what I also find very good is that there is also a lot of programme, so, yes. And that you can still have time for yourself if you need it. (Interviewee in interview)"*

#### 4.5. The training in Fornsbach

The participants were very positive about the training in Fornsbach. According to the participants' statements, it seems that the expectations formulated in advance, such as having opportunities to shape and act or to develop and expand decision-making and action competences in practice, were realised in full. It is reported that above all the workshop on the topic of "group leadership" contributed to the improvement of standing and self-confident positioning in the group. Methodological competences were also taught well in this workshop.

With regard to a self-confident appearance in the group, the expansion of methodological competences as well as the numerous reflection offers in Fornsbach, not only the workshop mentioned but the entire training activities were rated particularly positively. Due to the increase in self-confidence and confidence in one's own person, one can deal with critical group constellations in a more relaxed way and face unpredictable moments with more composure.

*"I am simply much more relaxed and can also, yes, better deal with it when things don't work out and know how group dynamics work" (interviewee in interview).*

One can build on the experiences in Fornsbach for further professional and voluntary activities, one benefits from what one has learned. What was learned in Fornsbach is understood as extremely helpful for the demands and expectations associated with professional life; in addition, it is also assessed as relevant for personality development as a whole.

**Highlights:** One person described the possibility of independently leading a small workshop as a highlight in Fornsbach. As a result, participants were able to become active in a leadership function and try it out. Another highlight described by another person was the reflection rounds, which were well led by the IBG staff. Here it was important to be able to exchange ideas in a small group, but also in a larger plenary, because reflection in the large group in particular made it possible to get to know the different perspectives of the participants and to compare them with their own experiences, concerns and perceived challenges.

*"That they have actually gone through such a development, like, like me. Not the same, of course, but just a similar process". (Interviewee in interview)*

**Challenges:** The participants interviewed mentioned the tight programme as a challenge in Fornsbach. In terms of content, the programme was very compact and filled with many different topics.

*"The days were very very full" (interviewee in interview).*

This was felt to be emotionally and cognitively very exhausting. Reflection was planned twice a day in the small groups. Very personal and intimate topics were often mentioned. There was a danger that these reflection phases would take on a forced character. In this regard, it is suggested that this offer be made somewhat freer, for example by offering the individual reflection phases in small groups according to need. At the same time, it is often difficult to open up in the large group.

The participants in the interviews report that they also derive great benefit for their professional perspective or life planning. In professional practice, not everything can be predicted, and in life planning, too, it is difficult to make predictions. In Fornsbach, they learned to deal better with this contingency.

In summary, the interview passages clearly show that the training in Fornsbach was very positively received. The expectations were fulfilled.

*"I went out with a very positive attitude. Exactly. I went in with a positive attitude and came out with an even more positive one." (Interviewee in interview)*

#### 4.6. Experiences in work camp management

From the interviews it can be concluded that all participants were very excited in the run-up to the independent work camp leadership. Although they had been well prepared for the leadership function, as described above, the inner excitement remained. The interview participants describe that the leadership function was very exhausting due to the high level of responsibility and their own demands. Combined with little sleep and numerous coordinations (also between leadership and co-leadership), it was often difficult to maintain an overview. Among other things, it was recognised that the leadership function was not limited to the activities, but that one also had to keep an eye on many organisational processes in the background, as well as preparation and follow-up. In retrospect, however, it was a great experience, also because one was forced to act and make decisions due to the many challenges. As one interviewee put it:

*"For me it was a great experience, because in many respects I also jumped into the deep end a bit or had to overcome myself." (Interviewee in interview)*

Important learning moments:

*„I don't think I've ever been as relaxed as I was there". (Interviewee in interview)*

In this sense, it is not surprising that the interviewees see important learning moments in the realisation that they cannot "control everything" and have to adapt to the circumstances to a certain extent. Of course, this does not mean relinquishing leadership and responsibility; rather, the interviewees are concerned with accepting the autonomy of the individual participants. This refers to an important social pedagogical principle of recognition and autonomy of subjects (cf. e.g. Scherr 2010; Lösch et al. 2011). Four important learning moments are thus named:

- adapting to circumstances and letting go of control.
- the acceptance of autonomy and the recognition of subjects.

Taking on the leadership of a work camp and being responsible for it requires dealing with uncertainties and contingency. The possibility of creating spaces for action and community processes, which are so central to the non-formal sector, become a necessary principle in leadership responsibility. It is therefore a matter of the ability to endure contingency. The necessity of this endurance is vividly documented in the following quote:

*"I have to get involved in something. I have no guarantees anywhere that everything will work out 100 per cent. I simply have to learn to improvise. (interviewee in interview)*

When conducting their own work camps, the interviewees mentioned other relevant learning moments, which are outlined here in key words:

- the relevance of camp management for the professional future.

The interviewees recognise that the competences learned and the educational processes experienced in the non-formal sector can be directly linked to the reflections on values, attitudes and norms in everyday professional life and are of great importance there.

- the importance of taking responsibility for a group

The interviewees formulate the high level of responsibility and the seriousness and trustworthiness that go hand in hand with taking on a leadership function. For the participants, taking responsibility in a work camp means taking responsibility for people.

- the relevance of the format (work camp, non-formal education) and the educational opportunities embedded in it.

Several times, the respondents express positive views about the format. The non-formal education setting makes it possible to learn special skills, some of which were unknown to them. These include skills in the craft field as well as other skills and competences. According to the interviewees, there is no hierarchisation of the individual areas, but they are understood as equal to each other. What is important to the interview participants is the broader spectrum of educational opportunities that this setting offers, especially compared to other formal settings.

*"Okay, no matter what you do, such events, such seminars, they simply bring that, they bring you into exchange. And it is always totally important that you somehow broaden your perspectives (...) so that you don't somehow get stuck in your development. So that you are always inspired anew. And that's what happened."  
(interviewee in interview)*

- Acknowledgement of ambiguity

Both in relation to the experiences in the group context (for example in Fornsbach and Brno) and in the practice of the group leaders, the relevance of the recognition of ambiguity becomes clear in the interviews. The individual reflections, the exchange with others in the group, the joint action and the shaping of a communally understood everyday life requires the ability to endure difference. Empathy is certainly important for this. However, tolerance of ambiguity consists first and foremost in the ability to tolerate different values and lifestyles. The ability to do this also implies effects in everyday professional life. As one interviewee put it:

*"When you are forced, I think, when I work somewhere, I am also forced to work with people I don't know before, with whom I might not get along. And that was actually the same situation in this work camp, so to speak." (Interviewee in interview)*

## Part II

„Things usually work out, and if not, there are great people to help you out“ (DWC)

Part II of this report presents the research results from the year 2021, which are based on the evaluated learning diaries of the participants from the training and the work camp management. In addition, the participants' written reflections are used as examples. The presentation of the results is followed by conclusions for the entire period of 2019 and 2020.

### 5. Research Results 2021

The diary for the camp leader training (DWT) asked the participants a total of ten questions, which were primarily aimed at self-reflections and assessments of the participants' personality development: For example, participants were asked in general about aspects they had learned about themselves through the training, but also more specifically about key moments or so-called "aha moments". Challenging situations as well as positive and negative experiences were to be reflected on.

The diary for the work camp leaders (DWC) contained similar questions: On the one hand, learning contents related to the central topics of the work camp were asked (e.g. sustainability, cultures, conflict management, etc.), on the other hand, there were reflection questions on experiences in the group setting. The participants' assessments of their learning progress or, for example, of decision-making in the group context were mainly reflected against the background of their function as camp leaders.

Based on the questions of the DWT, the following results are summarised and supplemented by the results from the DWC and the written reflections.

#### 5.1. What did the participants learn about themselves and about their role as camp leaders?

The diary entries for the questions (F1: What have you learned during the camp leader training about yourself? And Q2: What have you learned about the camp leader role you will have this summer? List three key findings you are taking away ...) were systematised for the present evaluation according to four central categories.

##### 5.1.1. Group interaction and communication, social competence

Many entries could be subsumed under this category. The participants have become aware that they can communicate well in a group and exchange ideas, contents and experiences with other people.

*„I have realised that I am a communicative person who likes to interact with people and exchange ideas, approaches, and experiences.“*

One participant describes being able to engage other group members well and generate a constructive, positive mood.

*„Also I realised that I can make other people feel welcome and accepted, that I can communicate with everybody in a friendly and including way.“*

The relevance of interaction and communication in the group is also evident in passages from the DWC. One person describes how they were able to perceive and participate in the different group dynamics:

*„Due to the different groups dynamics I could see the different process. That was very interesting“.*

Elsewhere it says:

*„I got a bit more sensible for the needs that the group has and how to cope with them together with the things that we have to do on the workcamp. Also I learned how to also be there for the individuals and listen to them and then to combine everyones needs“.*

#### 5.1.2. *Self-positioning/role as camp leader*

In order to be able to take on a leadership role, it is important for participants to be authentic and to treat people with respect..

*„For me it is important to maintain a respectful interaction amongst colleagues“*

Elsewhere it says in this context

*„that it is good to speak direct“.*

In the group context, it is also important to find one's own (authentic) position and to rely on one's own feelings:

*„Find your own role as a leader – that's important because I should feel confident and there is no "one perfect role". I need to find my good feeling way“.*

This also means that the participants (as can be read in the DWC, for example) have slowly grown into the role of camp leaders:

*„I was getting into my role more and more“.*

The role of the camp leadership is reflected intensively in the diaries and the participants are very aware of the responsibility:

*„Camp leader is an equal participant but has more responsibility - it makes for a fine line between doing the leading and being part of the group“ –*

The mediating function they can take on is important to them, as it can often decide on the further course of the work camp:

*„Being the link between the volunteers and the project partners - this makes or breaks the success of the project and this is what I as camp leader have much influence on“.*

It is important for the participants in relation to the role of camp leader to act as a confidant and to handle the needs and issues of the group with care. Accordingly, one person writes in her diary:

*„The camp leader should try to make everyone feel comfortable and included in the group. He/she should make the participants feel that they can trust him/her and tell him/her their worries or if they don't feel good. The camp leader needs to listen to every participant and take their worries seriously and then take steps to make the participants feel better.“*

Elsewhere, the role model function is emphasised:

*„The camp leader should stick to all the rules and act as he/she wants the participants to act. S/he is a role model for the participants. If the camp leader just does what s/he wants and does not stick to the rules, the participants might not see the reason why they should stick to the rules“.*

In connection with self-positioning and role appropriation, some passages in the DWC are also interesting. There, in response to the question: (Q8: What did you learn about yourself?) one can read quite specifically:

*„that I am good at leading :) and that I don't like hierarchy“.*

The participants also feel encouraged by their experiences at the work camp to lead workshops for several hours in a foreign language without tiring the group.

*„I can do and lead a workshop like this in English for more than three hours and bring the group due this time“.*

### 5.1.3. Self-criticism

The participants take a self-critical stance at numerous points in the diary. They recognise from their experiences in the training that they still have a lot to learn, e.g. to remain calm in challenging situations or to concentrate on the essential goals. As one participant writes:

*„to be more patient with other camp leaders, learn to control and hide your emotions“*

Another person writes:

*„I realise that it is hard for me to keep track. Thus, sometimes I need to find focus again. Frequent short breaks (move a little bit, drink something, close the eyes and take long deep breaths) help me to find focus again“.*

And another person writes that she (more often) needs to let things take their course.

*„I need to be more relaxed and let things develop“.*

Gaining a self-critical attitude, especially in the role of camp leadership, is also described in many places in the written reflections. In this context, for example, arguments with other participants in difficult situations are mentioned (for example, in conflicts). But it can also be about situations in

which the camp leader introduces himself to the participants and in this context has to clarify his position within the group: "Introduction of myself and ask if first name is okay" (wr). A third example mentioned in the written reflections refers to stamina and the ability to concentrate: "workshop in English for +/- three hours; moderation, being present all the time, lead a discussion or support and be responsible all the time" (wr).

#### 5.1.4. Conflict management

A central theme that frequently appears in the diaries of F1 and especially F2 relates to the question of how to deal with conflicts. Here, for example, the participants learned that conflicts are normal and must be endured or dealt with.

*„Conflicts are okay and normal - I will listen to the different perspectives like I always do, so that we hopefully find a solution (maybe with compromises) which suits everyone (best case)“.*

In connection with conflict management, one person emphasised that she also appreciated the theoretical references in the seminar:

*„I was able to refresh my theoretically competences like in conflict management“.*

#### 5.2. What did the participants learn in detail in the sessions?

This chapter subsumes the questions (Q3: What sessions did you find particularly useful in the camp leader training and what did you learn in these sessions?) from the DWT as well as (Q2: Have you learnt anything on the theme of sustainability? If yes, what? and Q3: Have you learnt anything about different cultures? If yes, what?) from the DWC.

According to the participants' diary entries, it can be said that all learning units were interesting and helpful:

*„All quite equal“.*

Another participant wrote that she felt well prepared by the sessions to take on a leadership role herself:

*„I have to say each sessions was very helpful and I feel more prepared for leading a workcamp“.*

*Conflict management* is also a relevant topic here, which offers recurring opportunities for reflection. The participants find the "real life scenarios" helpful and have learned that there does not have to be only "one perfect solution", but that sometimes a combination of different solution strategies can be useful:

*„sometimes a combination is a good alternative“.*

Especially since conflict management resolution strategies are perceived as complex processes, the participants emphasised the relevance of the exchange in the group and a joint brainstorming:

*„I think there is many different ways of solving a conflict, but it was very good to exchange ideas on how to react, as everybody has his/her own way and I could learn from the others ideas“.*

The topic of sustainability continues to be of great relevance to the participants. One participant describes that sustainability is very important for her personally, but that she learned to communicate about it in a better way through the experiences in the training:

*„because I never thought of particulary talking to the camp participants about that topic even though it is an important aspect for me. It helped me to get to know ways of communicating sustainability to the participants“.*

In another diary entry it is described that the experiences in the group context of the training were particularly helpful to deal with this topic and to find a "starting point" in the conversation:

*„I think it was great to exchange experiences how to include and share ideas to make a camp more sustainable among each other. Even if you think it is impossible to include a more sustainable option, there is always one small starting point where change happens“.*

The diary entries that were noted down at the work camps also testify to the relevance of the topic. The participants often describe concrete situations in which they discussed with other participants:

*„I talked (...) about sustainable shopping and she told me that's a bit difficult with the workcamp budget. She would have liked to buy more bio food and less plastic but due to the shopping opportunities and the budget it was not that easy.“*

Others describe that the sustainability theme challenges them to get creative:

*„Tab water can used as drinking water in Spain (at least in some parts). Reuse old pieces which are actually garbage to build new things. Get creative“*

In another place, it is mentioned that sustainability is an everyday topic, which at the same time implies the difficulty of changing the behaviour of others without being missionary. For example, there was a person who always left leftovers on the plate. This person had been approached about it and it had probably been quite difficult to get them to be more sensitive:

*„(...) this showed me, that sustainability is, even though present everywhere, still a big topic. You also have to cope with people from very different "sustainability-backgrounds" depending on what they learned in their families... and that to change habits takes some time and that you should not be impatient but try to explain.“*

The reflection diaries clearly show the participants' engagement with *intercultural issues* (especially DWC). The workshop on intercultural learning is described positively by the participants. According to the entries, the participants discussed globalisation and related intercultural issues.

One diary entry criticises the stereotyping that often takes place in the field of intercultural learning:

*„We will also have stereotypes about different cultures. Try to have this in mind and reflect on your actions“.*

Sensitivity to cultural issues is an important aspect that is also mentioned in the written reflections. This includes, for example, "awareness of different topics like discriminations (e.g. racism), stereotypes, similar & different perspectives, privileges..." (wr). And at another point, a participant reflects on "questioning one's own cultural characteristics" (wr).

### 5.3. What positive and/or negative experiences did the participants have?

The participants had the opportunity to describe and reflect on their negative or positive experiences of the training, especially in the DWT questions (Q4: What was the most positive aspect of the camp leader training? And Q5: What was the most negative aspect of the camp leader training?), participants had the opportunity to describe and reflect on their negative or positive experiences from the training. In the DWC, these aspects were addressed in relation to the experience of leading the camp (Q11: What was the most negative aspect of leading the workcamp? And Q12: What was the most positive aspect of leading the workcamp?)

The participants rated the group atmosphere that the IBG facilitates as particularly positive.

*„Great and positive people (both teachers and participants) as well as a lovely atmosphere with room for exchange and every opinion“*

There are numerous passages in the diaries about how happy the participants are to be embedded in such a constructive group context and to experience their self-efficacy in group processes.

*„(...) the happy participants u get when u are a good leader“ (DWT).*

The experiences of self-efficacy and the learning effects in the role of camp leader are also clearly expressed in the DWC. For example, one participant writes:

*„Leading the workshop just showed me a further perspective of myself (...). Also when I improved a method during one workshop and swapped a bit showed me that I am able to be flexible and I am able to lead a camp.“*

After the experience as a work camp leader, one person describes that she found it particularly positive how the group formed over time and that she was accepted in the role of a confidant:

*„(...) and how everyone found their place. It was nice to see that everybody felt comfortable in the group. I also enjoyed being a trust-person for the participants“.*

In the DWT, participants noted negatively that the training had to take place online and that this made it somewhat tough, tiring and superficial:

*„online sessions were exhausting and a bit boring, I did not really learn a lot“,  
„it was all very general“.*

However, another person also found the online sessions challenging:

*„but that [the online sessions] also had advantages“.*

Elsewhere in the DWT it is emphasised that they would have preferred to meet "live", but understandably this was not possible, and the IBG nevertheless made the best of the adverse situation:

*„Well, of course I would have loved to meet everyone live, that would have been great but unfortunately nothing we could have done different. You made the best out of this situation“.*

#### 5.4. Which special moments and key-lessons do the participants describe?

This question summarises the evaluated results from the questions (Q7: Did you have any "Aha-moment" during the training? And Q13: "Did you have an "Aha-moment" during the workcamp?") from the DWT and DWC are summarised. The DWC question (Q14: What are the three key lessons you take away from the experience of leading the workcamp?) also allowed participants to reflect on the key moments of their experience.

One participant, who had previously led summer camps for children, describes the special experience of leading a group of adults and peers as an "aha moment". She writes,

*„that the camp leader is ‚a participants with special tasks‘. As I have only led freetime summer-camps with smaller children before, where the camp leader is seen more in a teacher/parent-role, I never thought of how to be a camp leader for older people who might be the same age as I am“*

Another person highlights as an "aha moment" the different methods used, for example in the training:

*„I liked the different methods, also for example the ones with the conflict situations and where we could make a dot/point how we would have acted. It was a perfect method to talk about the different opinions“.*

Another person perceives as an "aha moment" that they have become more and more self-confident over time:

*„Also to see from workshop to workshop that I am becoming safer was a nice moment“.*

*„I was amazed how good the art-project worked out even though I thought it is very difficult and not going to look great if so many people are painting at the same painting. Also I learned a lot usefull skills about setting up a big art-project. The spanish camp-leader had a slot of leading-skills that I also learned a lot from.“*

The experiences made in the context of the international group setting and the joint activities are sometimes described very emotionally:

*„that working in an international group is amazing, how kind-hearted people can be, how beautiful nature and the forest is, and that the government should invest more in this kind of work“.*

Other entries from participants show how important it is to them to be flexible in dealing with time planning and methods: For example, free time is also an important aspect to consider when planning a work camp, especially because it is demanded by the participants:

*„Freetime is wanted by the group, you don't have to have a plan for activities for all the time“.*

Furthermore, one person writes that speaking together in a foreign language was a key moment of learning for her: you know that you yourself do not speak the foreign language perfectly and you should just remain authentic towards the others and 'just speak'. She writes in this context:

*„(...) making a workshop in English is so so much fun! From most of the participants English is not the mother language. So just talk. (...) stay authentic, tell also that I am also not perfect with the language. Maybe it helps some participants with their own language barrier“.*

Based on the material, the following dimensions can be identified as key moments in a theses-like and summarised manner:

- *international context as a key biographical moment,*
- *Speaking and acting in another language,*
- *flexibility in planning,*
- *authenticity of one's own person, and*
- *leisure factor.*

#### 5.5. Which experiences and learning moments are important to the participants for their studies and future careers?

Central to the research in 2021 has been to describe the importance of non-formal education for studies and careers. For this purpose, the answers to the questions (F8/F4: What things did you learn that could be for your studies or your future professional life?) from both reflection diaries are summarised below.

Many different experiences and learning moments were described in the diaries as particularly relevant for studies and future professional life. Recurring in this context are, for example, the topics of sustainability and conflict management, which were discussed in the work camps.

*„Well I think the topic sustainability and conflict management is in any part of live very important. It was great to talk in this setting again about it“.*

But the topic of communication is also relevant in this context. In the work camps, people learn to communicate and to negotiate things through communication. One passage in the DWT simply states the following:

*„Communication, communication, communication“.*

With regard to conflict management, the importance of the different approaches learned in the work camp is emphasised:

*„Conflict management and the different ways to approach it. Understanding how a conflict arises and how the situation can be calmed down“.*

The relevance of the competence to communicate with each other, which in this context means more than speaking or learning a foreign language, is also expressed in many places in the written reflections. This includes, for example, the willingness to stay in contact with the IBG experts as a workcamp leader, but it is also about "leading discussions" (wr), introducing the groups (i.e. standing in front and moderating) or, as described elsewhere in the written reflections, "being a communicator for everyone" (wr). Furthermore, the participants also understand their communication competence in the task of regulating "personal belongings" (wr).

Interculturality (or intercultural learning) are seen as further important learning moments. According to the participants, the international context in which the activities take place plays an essential role for their professional future and their studies.:

*„This training especially focused on international groups (...) and how to communicate in an international atmosphere. (...) from different cultural backgrounds I think it is an very important and useful skill to be able to interact with a culturally mixed group of people in a way that everyone is included. Also I am interested in working abroad for some time and of course here intercultural competence is very important“.*

*„The interaction with people from different backgrounds (culturally and also just different families)“,*

The participants are very aware of the fact that, similar to everyday life, living and working together is also organised in international work camps. In their learning diaries, they point out that in their function as camp leaders they mediate between different interests over a period of time and organise life together. One person describes:

*„Living together with 20 people on a rather small space is challenging but possible. Good organisation and team work is required. Certain rules and sanctions need to be set for the co-living to work out“.*

## 6. Conclusions from 2019 and 2021

If we summarise the central results of the project from the years 2019 and 2021 at the end of the present observations, it becomes apparent that the participants were able to gain many different experiences through the INSPIRIT programme, which have a particular relevance for the acquisition and expansion of their competences as well as their personality development and which are therefore also important for their future professional life. In summary, the following can be concluded from the results:

### 6.1. Multi-layered educational and learning moments

- *Participants reflect on the broad and diverse corpus of learning and educational opportunities available to them in the project.*

First of all, the written reflections show the wide range of learning that the participants have been offered. In the evaluation round, for example, they reflect on moments of intercultural learning and intercultural sensitisation (Cultural Awareness); they describe multiple situations in which their team spirit, empathy and also self-confidence were in demand (Relationship). Communication is also a relevant topic for the participants in the group context. An essential moment for the further development of their competences is for them the assumption of leadership roles and functions. They describe not only a further development with regard to technical-mathematical learning and with regard to theoretical concepts (Mathematical technical) or organisation (Management): The confrontation with their role as camp leaders also brings them further in the development of their personality.

### 6.2. Political Engagement and Interference

- *Voluntary activities and social engagement are a central part of the respondents' lives and part of their self-image*

The project participants, as became clear especially in the interviews, are on the whole socially engaged, politically interested and the involvement of themselves in social issues are a central part of their lives. They are interested in developing themselves further. These are central motives for them to participate in the project. Accordingly, the participants engage in the relatively open educational process that they encounter in the work camp training and in the leadership function.

### 6.3. The non-formal education setting as an extended political learning and competence space

- *Participants learn theoretical concepts directly linked to practice and group interaction.*
- *The non-formal education setting makes it possible to learn special skills that were sometimes not known to one.*
- *What is important to the participants is the extended spectrum of educational opportunities that this setting offers, especially compared to other formal areas.*

The project participants understand the work camp training and the experiences as work camp leaders as learning moments of practice and theory. They distinguish the experiences in the work camp from the learning experiences in their studies. While they portray studies as predominantly theoretical and abstract, they describe workcamps as an area where theoretical aspects are explained through

practical references and in interaction. Therefore, the theory of the learning units in the work camp is less abstract, distant or linked through activities and thus understandable to them. This makes work camps a meaning-building group area in which responsibility is shared and borne.

#### 6.4. The experience of self-efficacy as a political moment in the group context

- *The group dynamics reinforce interaction skills and the sense of community and belonging. The forms of interaction simultaneously serve group cohesion as well as individual self-discovery and the experience of self-worth and self-efficacy.*

The interviews, but also the diary entries, draw attention to the relevance of the group setting for the development of learning competences and educational moments. In the group (work) setting, the group context and the assumption of roles and functions become apparent. In the work camp setting, a social positioning and individual self-description in the group context takes place - similar to later professional life. Shared tasks and common goals create a feeling of belonging and bonding. Conflicts can be dealt with and interests discussed. In the work camp, the participants act in the group context. They explicitly mention the following developments in their learning diaries: group interaction and communication, social competence, self-positioning/esp. as camp leader, self-criticism, conflict management.

#### 6.5. Contingency experience for design and experimentation opportunities

- *The participants recognise that the competences and experienced educational processes learned in the non-formal sector can be directly linked to the values, attitudes and norms of individual life plans and everyday working life and are of great importance there.*

Through the different ways of interaction in the group and through the balancing of interests, a field of experimentation is opened up (and accompanied pedagogically) in which the participants can try out their strengths (and weaknesses) and relate to the individual attitudes of others. What is discussed and negotiated in this field is political education, i.e. also the question of what is important and under which conditions or in which understandings of values one would like to live and work. This discussion as a process of political education is exercised and learned in the context of the work camps and thus gives impulses that become important in professional life at the latest.

#### 6.6. International education and competence

- *the participants perceive the international context as a key biographical moment, which includes speaking and acting in a foreign language, but also tolerance of ambiguity and intercultural sensitisation.*

The diary entries clearly show the relevance that the participants attribute to international encounters. In addition to language acquisition, the form of communication and understanding each other is important to them. Understanding each other and the critical exchange of opinions, positions and attitudes is a negotiation process that can also be realised beyond language competence. Experience in an international context is a biographical caesura that can lead to reflection on one's own person and one's attitudes or privileges and clarify the powerful mechanisms of living together. Not least against the backdrop of globalisation and digitalisation, international experiences are certainly an essential aspect not only for studies but also for professional life.

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*Developments in International  
Volunteer Workcamp Leaders in Italy*

*INSPIRIT Project: Italian National Research Report*

*2019 & 2021*

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*Coordinated by YAP - Youth Action for Peace*

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## Introductory Remarks

INSPIRIT project provided a chance to shed more light on the experience of young people who undertake a specific volunteering task: leading an international volunteering workcamp. Such young people, it may be presumed, are undergoing a specific and potentially enriching learning experience. The INSPIRIT project involves universities and voluntary organizations from Germany, Italy and Czech Republic and aims at the recognition of non-formal education experiences – in this case of volunteer camps (workcamps) – by the university system. For Italy, the organization that coordinated the project is YAP (Youth Action for Peace), a voluntary association that operates in Europe and internationally.

YAP has been active since 1970 and was born after the experience of solidarity experienced by a group of young students during the flood in Florence. Over the years, the association has always maintained the original vocation of the movement in search of the conditions for sustainable peace in the world, acting mainly through youth mobility. Today, as many years ago, YAP allow young people from different backgrounds and from different social and cultural experiences to discover a place through solidarity and international volunteering, generally participating in small local development initiatives.

YAP is currently part of the two most important international volunteering networks in the world - ALLIANCE of European Voluntary Service Organizations and CCIVS (Coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service). Today YAP annually sends more than 500 volunteers abroad and welcomes about 200 international volunteers in the projects it organizes in various Italian regions.

For Italy, to carry out the INSPIRIT research, YAP made use of the collaboration of the Department of Political and Social Studies of the University of Salerno. Participation in the INSPIRIT project was recognized, on the basis of the Regulations of the Degree Courses and the agreements with YAP, as a curricular internship experience (with relative achievement of the relevant training credits). Exploration of the learning outcomes in the workcamp leaders is the main focus of the INSPIRIT research endeavour, as outlined above, and therefore the main research question was defined as follows:

- What developments can be identified in connection to the ‘INSPIRIT programme for young workcamp leaders’ in its participants?

In order to also keep in mind specific learning contexts which may occur during such volunteering engagements, as well as practical implications of the developments identified in the research participants, specific research questions were defined:

- What activities of the INSPIRIT programme can be linked to developments in its participants?
- What developments in INSPIRIT programme participants can be linked to their professional lives (study and/or work)?

INSPIRIT research aims at identifying learning outcomes in young people in workcamp leadership roles with a special emphasis on the synergies between these outcomes and competence profiles of university students in order to support cooperation between the volunteering and the university sectors. This research report contains results from a research conducted in 2019 and in 2021 in Italy and provides the reader with (1) an overview of research focusing on international volunteering in Italy, (2) a description of the cycle of the workcamp volunteer leaders, (3) methodological foundations of the INSPIRIT research conducted in 2019 and in 2021, (4) research results combining 2019 and 2021 data collections, and (5) a brief summary and outlook for future research endeavours in the domain of international volunteering.

## 1. International volunteering in Italy

At the national level, volunteering is a widespread phenomenon with a long tradition. The national legal system recognizes the social value and function of volunteering as an expression of participation, solidarity and pluralism.

The provisions of the Third Title of the Third Sector Code (Legislative Decree 117/17) also apply to youth volunteering. The article of the code on the promotion of the culture of volunteering invites public administrations, within the limits of available resources, to support volunteering among young people, also through specific initiatives to be implemented in the premises of schools and universities, and with the involvement of organizations of volunteers and other entities of the Third Sector.

At the national level, one of the main tools for promoting youth volunteering is the Universal Civil Service - institution of the Republic regulated by a specific law (legislative decree March 6, 2017, n.40) which was born as an instrument of unarmed and non-violent defense of Homeland - accessible to young people aged between 18 and 28, managed by the Department for Youth Policy and Universal Civil Service of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers.

In Italy, volunteering has historically developed through some great cultural matrices: the main ones are the Catholic matrix, linked to the work of evangelization of the Church and based on the concept of Christian pietas; the worker and socialist matrix developed starting from the nineteenth century and the liberal matrix (Mantovani, 2004; Bianchi, 2005; Moro & Pacelli, 2012). The Italian Constitution provides an important stimulus for social solidarity. Articles 2 and 3 provide for compliance with the fundamental duty of solidarity and assign joint responsibility to the community and public administrations.

Historical  
developments

In the first decades of the Republic, the prevailing model of voluntary work was of a philanthropic type, mainly oriented towards assistance. Since the end of the seventies, volunteering has become increasingly important in the public sphere, also as an opportunity to engage and exercise active citizenship and as a subject for the protection and promotion of citizens' rights.

In 1991 the first framework law on volunteering was approved (law 266/1991) after a parliamentary debate that lasted fifteen years. The law defines the legal profile of voluntary organizations and regulates their relationship with public institutions.

Subsequently, a radical reform of the Third Sector is undertaken. In 2017, the Third Sector Code (Legislative Decree 117/2017) brings together in a single text all the types of Third Sector Entities, i.e. those organizations dedicated to voluntary work in the broad sense.

At the national level, the involvement of young people in social and civil life is linked to the historical development of conscientious objection and civil service (Garelli, 1992; Pastore, 2011). The Italian constitution provided for compulsory military service. This rule leads to the birth of the movement of conscientious objectors and to the law 722/72 which recognizes those who do not want to perform military service for reasons of conscience to perform civil service as an alternative.

With the suspension of conscription in 2005, the civil service became voluntary for young people of both sexes in the 18 to 28 age group. In 2017, Legislative Decree 40/2017

transforms the "national" civil service into "universal" civil service, setting itself the goal of offering this experience to all young people who intend to do it.

The national strategy on volunteering, which is also aimed at young people, is not contained in a specific act, but can be inferred from the provisions contained in Title III of Legislative Decree 117/2017 art. 17 - Code of the third sector where the subjects and methods for the "Promotion of the culture of volunteering" are identified. The universal civil service (legislative decree 40/17) represents a further step in the strategy of involving young people in activities aimed at the unarmed and nonviolent defense of the homeland, education, peace among peoples, promotion of the founding values of the Republic with particular reference to the fulfillment of the duties of political, economic and social solidarity.

Existence of a national strategy

The third sector code protects volunteers from possible cases of exploitation. For example, volunteers do not have to work for the organization in which they serve as volunteers. The law requires liability insurance coverage and comprehensive medical insurance. Furthermore, volunteers cannot be paid, but can receive reimbursements for the expenses actually incurred for the activity performed within the limits previously established by the institution. These provisions do not apply to voluntary operators of the universal civil service, to personnel employed abroad on a voluntary basis in international development cooperation activities, as well as to volunteer operators in mountain and speleological rescue.

Scope and contents

The Code provides that public administrations promote a culture of volunteering especially among young people, organizing promotional initiatives in the premises of schools, universities and elsewhere, involving voluntary organizations and other third sector bodies.

To encourage volunteering activities, the volunteer can apply for work permits and obtain certification of acquired skills and competences.

The universal civil service allows young people between 18 and 28 years to voluntarily participate in a service project lasting between eight months and a year in various fields of employment at the end of which a certificate of the activities carried out and skills is issued accrued.

Schools and universities can recognize these certifications as educational credit for students and public administrations can recognize the service performed in the context of competitions.

Law 92/2012 on labor market reform provides an official definition of lifelong learning: "the term lifelong learning refers to all learning activities formally, non-formally and informally undertaken in the course of life with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences from a personal, civic, social and / or occupational perspective". Furthermore, the same law provides for the establishment of a national public system for the certification of skills based on minimum service standards and uniform throughout the country.

Political framework

The "certifiable competences" are a structured combination of knowledge and skills also recognizable as training credits through a special procedure for the validation of non-formal and informal learning. The certification of competences is defined as a public act that guarantees the transparency and recognition of learning, in line with the objectives established by the European Union. A certification, diploma or qualification formally

certifies that the assessment and validation have been carried out by a public body or an authorized person.

Legislative decree 13/13 - issued in application of law no. 92/2012 - provides the general rules of the national system for the certification of skills. The decree makes the new national skills certification system operational; aims to increase the professional skills acquired on the job, as well as those acquired in free time to promote mobility, facilitate the meeting between supply and demand in the labor market, increase the transparency of learning and the relevance of certifications at national level and European level.

Subsequently, an inter-ministerial decree issued on 30 June 2015 defined the national framework of regional qualifications. The decree established:

a tool for the mutual recognition of regional qualifications, standard procedures and certification for the identification/validation of non-formal and informal learning and the certification of skills.

Finally, the inter-ministerial decree issued on 8 January 2018 established the national qualifications framework (National Qualifications Framework - NQF), which is the tool that describes and classifies all the qualifications issued within the national system for the certification of skills.

Young people who have participated in voluntary activities can apply for the recognition of their training credits and certify their work experience by following the various agreements on a regional basis.

Existing  
agreements

Legislative Decree 40/17, "Establishment and discipline of the universal civil service" in art. 8 provides that the civil service bodies carry out all the preparatory activities for the recognition and enhancement of the skills acquired by the volunteer operators during the universal civil service. In addition, Article 19 establishes the issue to the same operators of a certificate for the period of service carried out with an indication of the related activities.

Within the European mobility programs such as Erasmus + and the European Solidarity Corps, young volunteers are entitled to receive the Youthpass which certifies the experience achieved and the skills acquired during the experience.

## 2. Brief Description of the Volunteer Workcamp Leaders' Cycle

The international volunteer camps, in Europe and all over the world, are a strong experience of sharing: a full immersion in a culture and in a society different from ours made by sharing one's day and one's time, work and leisure, with young people and people from all over the world, carrying out work of social utility with a strong impact on the host community. Through the concrete help of work, young people have the opportunity to live the experience of community life together with young people of different nationalities.

The camps are activities to support local projects, which last 2-3 weeks in the period of June, July, August and September and are divided between environmental, manual, social, cultural projects, animation projects with children, with the disabled, etc.

The group is made up of volunteers from all over the world (generally no more than 2 people from the same country), the common language is English. Each project is followed by a "Group Leader", an experienced volunteer who takes care of the organization both in terms of work and "logistical" aspects (organizing canteen shifts, offering ideas for moments of socialization among the volunteers, solving small problems etc); group leaders are identified/trained through a short residential course which usually takes place in spring.

Each year, the Italian association YAP organizes between 15 and 20 work camps throughout Italy for adults (18+) and minors (16-17 years) and welcomes more than 200 volunteers from all over the world.

The workcamp leader lifecycle can be identified in a cycle with different stages which

include:

1. Planning
2. Sponsorship the workcamp
3. Infosheet
4. Implementing the workcamps
5. Reflecting on the workcamps

Usually, the fields of volunteer work come presented to partners international between February and March of each year. The projects can be also presented in following months however it is important that the field be presented to YAP network at least 2 months before its inception.

### 1. Planning

In the agreements with the local partner the following points are established:

- The place and the socio-cultural context of the project
- The activities to be carried out
- The number of volunteers needed
- The conditions of board and lodging
- Period (s) (if there are several groups)

All pre-established conditions are reported in an agreement signed by YAP and the partner.

### 2. Sponsorship the workcamp

This phase consists of drafting an information document (in English) that contains the description of the project. YAP presents the project to international partners and, through them, to volunteers.

YAP receives applications from international volunteers and, together with the local partner, takes care of the selection.

In parallel with the selection of participants, YAP identifies the coordinator who during the project follows and coordinates the group of international volunteers, their participation in work activities and their interactions with the partner, the population and the environment hosting the work camp.

### **3. Infosheet**

It is crucial that the details relating to the organization of work are clearly indicated in the information document (infosheet) that is sent to volunteers at least 1 month before the start of the project. The working hours vary from 4 to 6 hours a day, 5 days a week. Volunteers work under the guidance of a technical manager (preferably coming from the intervention area) that know how to indicate, explain and directing work activities. Room and board are offered by the host organization, not in exchange for work done but as an indispensable condition to the volunteers to commit on a volunteer project.

### **4. Implementing the workcamps:**

The implementing of the workcamp includes:

- the implementation and technical coordination of work activities
- animation and management of the group of volunteers
- the presentation and promotion of the project at the local level and the group's interaction with the surrounding community and environment.

The local partner and the coordinator are responsible for organizing together with the volunteers both the management of collective life and the realization of small events to be shared with the community or among the members of the group (cultural visits, trips, excursions, international dinners, availability, etc.).

### **5. Reflecting on the workcamps**

After the workcamp implementation phase is over, the leaders and the volunteers leave for home, the reflection stage begins. Starting on the individual level, each of the leaders has time to reflect on their respective experience in the workcamp.

### 3. Methodology

INSPIRIT research strives to provide evidence for positive developments in participants of training activities for workcamp leaders, in order to support university decisions to embed these courses in their own curricula.

The main research question was as follows:

- What developments can be identified in connection to the 'INSPIRIT programme for young workcamp leaders' in its participants?

In the following paragraphs will be illustrated the methodology used for the research conducted in 2019 and 2021.

#### 3.1. Methodology 2019

INSPIRIT research in 2019 was based aiming at exploring positive developments in workcamp leaders of "YAP - Youth Action for Peace" organized international volunteer workcamps.

Specific research questions, further leading the focus of the 2019 research, were as follows:

- What activities of the INSPIRIT programme can be linked to developments in its participants?
- What developments in INSPIRIT programme participants can be linked to their professional lives (study and/or work)?

Qualitative methodology (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017) combining several data collection methods was used in order to provide insights into previously unexplored area of a specific type of volunteering: young international workcamp leaders.

First and foremost, face to face and Skype semi-structured interviews were held (Bichi, 2007).

In May 2019, 9 young people were face to face interviewed in Poggio Mirteto (RI, Italy) the day before and the first day of the training for workcamp leaders. In particular, they were 6 females and 3 males, all of Italian origin with a mean age of 23.

Pre-interviews

According to the aims of INSPIRIT, all the interviewees are university students. The main areas on which the pre-interviews focused are as follows:

Family background; Mobility; Volunteering experiences; How they know about Inspirit; Reason of participation in Inspirit; Expectation; How Inspirit can help in everyday life; Similar project in the past; Group perception; What type of Recognition of the participation in INSPIRIT they expect from their university.

In September 2019, 6 out of the 9 young people were Skype and face-to-face interviewed, after having led the workcamp. They were 4 females and 2 males. The main areas on which the post-interviews focused are as follows:

Post-interviews

Important things happened in their life; New volunteering experience; New experience abroad; How was Inspirit/ downsides/ comparison with expectations; Connection of what developments in Inspirit with studies and professional development; Connection of Inspirit

with personal development; How they think these developments could be helpful in personal/professional life; How they used new skills/competences/developments in everyday life so far; How they plan to use these skills/competences/developments in the future; What were the important “learning moments” for them; What helping in their development and what obstacles there were; How the inspirit training compare to their past experiences from similar projects/activities; What are the differences (good or bad); What they think about the group of Inspirit participants; How they have shared news about their participation in Inspirit (with friends, family, teachers).

It is worth considering that the Pre- and Post-interviews conducted in Italy are mostly in line with the guidelines used throughout the INSPIRIT project. However, the guidelines were adapted in order to grasp specific aspects of interest and, with specific attention to the post-interviews, to collect also the narration of the workcamp experience as leader during the summer: this is due to the fact that the interviews were conducted in September, when the participants have also coordinated a workcamp as leader.

All the interviews - lasting 30-60 minutes each - were recorded with consents of the research participants, and the recordings were subsequently used to data analysis in order to answer the research questions. All interview recordings were anonymized, and all names used in this report in connection to the research participants have no relation to the real people. Interview guidelines used in the interviews are quoted as Annexes to this report.

Moreover, direct and participative observation (Burges, 1984; Van Maanen J, 1988, Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994; Atkinson *et al.*, 2001; Dewalt & Dewalt, 2002) of the training for the workcamp leaders in spring 2019, as well as of the final international reflection session in autumn 2019 in Brno (Czech Republic) was conducted. Field notes as well as photos and video recordings of some group reflections were used to collect data, with consents of the workcamp leaders. The field notes as well as the photos and video recordings were subsequently used for data analysis and triangulated with the semi-structured interviews (Cardano, 2011) in order to provide as detailed picture of the developments in young workcamp leaders as possible

Direct  
observation

All of the aforementioned data was collected during the 2019 INSPIRIT research and analysed in order to explore the research questions stated above. Results of analyses conducted on the data are discussed in the 4th chapter.

### 3.2. Methodology 2021

INSPIRIT research in 2021 was based aiming at exploring positive developments in workcamp leaders of “Solidarité Jeunesse” organized international volunteer workcamps. The research was carried out through the analysis of two Learning Diaries administered to young students in two different moments.

At first, the participants were asked to fill in the “Learning diaries Campleader”, administrated between 21 July and 3 august 2021 (after the participation of a training to become leader of workcamp).

Subsequently, young people who participated in coordination as a workcamp leader during the summer, filled out the “Learning diaries Workcamp”, administrated between 8 and 21 September 2021 (after the leading of workcamp).

Moreover, the analysis was also based on a final reflection phase that was carried out in Neu-Anspach (Frankfurt) from 25 to 30 September 2021, during which the participants of the individual national groups discussed the coordination experiences and reflected on the learning and acquired skills.

The results of the participants' reflections were analyzed through the written reflections produced by the young people during the meeting which took place in September.

With regard the “Learning diaries Campleader”, 6 young people have filled the diaries. In details, they were 3 females and 3 males of different origin (italian, french, german and colombian).

Learning  
Diaries  
Campleader

According to the aims of INSPIRIT, all the participants are university students.

The main areas on which the “Learning diaries Campleader” focused are as follows:

Learning acquired during the campleader training about yourself; Learning acquired about the campleader role will have this summer. (three key findings taking away and tell us why these are important to you); Particularly useful sessions in the campleader training and acquired learning in these sessions; The most positive aspect of the campleader training; The most negative aspect of the campleader training; Unanswered questions that participants should have been answered during the campleader training; “Aha-moment” during the training; Things that participants did learn that could be important for their studies or their future professional life; Expectations do participants have regarding the next activity (leading a Workcamp); Something else to share.

The diaries asked young people to provide the impressions about the Campleader Training carried out and the expectations they have about the next activity of leading a workcamp that they will have in the summer.

It is worth considering that the Learning Diaries conducted are in line with the guidelines used throughout the INSPIRIT project. However, the guidelines were adapted in order to grasp specific aspects of interest and to collect also the narration of the workcamp experience.

With regard the “Learning diaries Workcamp”, after leading the workcamp, 4 young people have filled the diaries. In details, they were 1 female (german origin) and 3 males (italian, french and colombian origin).

Learning  
Diaries  
Workcamp

The main areas on which the “Learning Diaries Workcamp” focused on are 4: (1) New knowledge (New learning regarding the work part of the workcamp; new learning on the theme of sustainability; new learning about different cultures; Things learnt that could be important for studies or future professional life); (2) Group dynamic (New learning from the group; How managed conflicts within the group); (3) Camp leading (Perception of their role as camp leader; learning about yourself; The cooperation with the co leader; challenging situations); (4) Summary (The most negative aspect of leading the workcamp; The most positive aspect of leading the workcamp; “Aha-moment” during the workcamp; Three key lessons participants take away from the experience of leading the workcamp; Which experiences from the campleaders training were helpful during the workcamp; anything else to share).

Moreover, the final international reflection session in September 2021 in Frankfurt was conducted, during which were produced written reflections about the experience of leading workcamp. Field notes as well as photos and video recordings of some group reflections were used to collect data, with consents of the workcamp leaders.

Written  
Reflection

All of the aforementioned data was collected during the 2021 INSPIRIT research and analysed in order to explore the research questions stated above. Results of analyses conducted on the data are discussed in the subsequent chapter.

#### 4. Research Results

In this part of the report, it will be analyzed the results of the research carried out in 2019 and 2021.

##### 4.1. Research Results 2019

The sample is made up of 9 university students, 6 females and 3 males, with an average age of 23 and with heterogeneous university education. They have medium-high human, cultural and social resources, their family background is characterized by a medium-high capital in which all parents work or have worked and are now retired, carrying out professions in which a medium-high educational qualification.

Pre-  
Interviews  
Results

Family  
background

From the Pre-Interviews it emerged that 2 out 9 young people already participated in workcamp experiences. In general, they all have volunteering experience.

The theme of mobility represents an essential element of the youth field: it is articulated along a perspective that goes beyond formal education and which assumes significant importance through international experiences. The latter are important in the lives of young people because they allow them to develop a vision of the world characterized by more blurred borders and borders, with distances easier to overcome and with an increase in international social capital (Friesenhahn, 2013; Cairns, 2015; Schild H. *et al.*, 2017; Cairns *et al.*, 2018;).

Mobility

All the young people interviewed show a strong propensity for mobility, their profile is in fact characterized by a wide, rich and varied background of experience gained in different contexts: from high school to university, from the world of work to associations, passing through pleasure in traveling and discovering new places. It is therefore a question of young people already socialized to this type of experience and ready to take advantage of new proposals and opportunities.

The mobility experiences are understood by the participants as an added value to their biographical paths, highlighting the opportunities they guarantee in terms of personal growth and widening their life prospects:

*"You take a lot more security [traveling], you understand that you can get where you want even if you are alone, and therefore this gave me a lot of strength to then do everything else, go to Spain, do Erasmus, that is, I have bought some independence. That is, maybe before I thought "oh my God alone where am I going?", While now it's not a problem, I feel more ... I have broken down those barriers" (If\_IT1).*

*"Traveling allows you to see things from different perspectives, which do not belong to those that have been transmitted to you, most of the time you find yourself in a new place and you think that there is another world to be discovered and of which you are not knowing, it opens you up to many things" (Df\_IT1).*

Some young people claim to have started traveling during their secondary studies, to carry out cultural exchanges and study periods in other European schools:

*"I made a lot of trips and a lot of exchanges when I was in high school, in Spain, in Australia, in Holland ... then on my own I traveled half the world because I really like to travel [...] I did volunteer work in Spain, then I traveled on my own. This year I will have taken 12 planes, that is, from July to January-February, 13-14 planes, I tried all the companies (laughs). Then from the point of view of train, bus, practically always, that is, I always travel" (BfIT\_2).*

A distinctive trait of some young people interviewed is the tendency to take trips also to meet young people they met during other mobility experiences. In this sense, their propensity for mobility also seems to strengthen social networks through informal relationships with other young people, generating a virtuous circle in which the younger people know others with similar experiences and they are stimulated to travel.

In addition, 7 out of 9 respondents are off-site students, they live alone in other cities and intend to continue their studies abroad or in any case in another university.

All this contributes to strengthening the tendency of young people to discover "other contexts" in which they are able to expand their symbolic universes of reference (Berger & Luckmann, 1969): in this way, their experiences are enriched with ever new experiences that are placed along a continuum that involves different areas: study, work and, as we will see immediately, the experiences of volunteering.

The attitude of young people interviewed towards mobility is intertwined with their predisposition to undertake both national and international volunteer experiences. The propensity to mobility also seems to act as a glue with the solidarity and philanthropic dimensions expressed by the young people interviewed. All the participants had previous experiences of volunteering: 4 have also carried out experiences of international volunteering to help people living in conditions of extreme poverty and hardship, 3 have carried out experiences in the field of social and health assistance, 2 have carried out experiences of volunteering in the field of environmental protection.

Volunteering  
experiences

In general terms, the young people interviewed boast a substantial background of voluntary work experiences, often linked to different social and cultural spheres and associations, from socio-health to welfare ones.

The reasons that led young people to enter the world of volunteering concern, in most cases, attention and care for others and wanting to offer their contribution to the community.

In September 2019, a second series of interviews was carried out on the same reference sample. Of the 9 subjects interviewed in the spring of 2019, 6 responded to the interviews after four months to the training. Of the 6 young people, 5 were interviewed via Skype and 1 was interviewed face to face. It should again be pointed out that the INSPIRIT project, which includes the research work that is being illustrated, also included a phase aimed at coordinating a workcamp during the summer period, in which 4 of the 6 interviewees participated.

Post-  
interviews  
Results

As regards the new volunteering experiences, in the period between May and September 2019, 2 out of 6 young people declared that they have carried out other volunteering experiences in addition to those foreseen by the INSPIRIT project. In particular, a young man took part in 2 volunteer projects and another had one experience. Both young people participated in the new experiences with the association of which they are volunteers. The other participants continue to have contacts with the associations of which they are members or with which they have carried out training and/or mobility activities.

New  
volunteer  
experiences

It emerges that the world of volunteering has a strong appeal on the young people interviewed, they show the perception that is very interesting to do something for the others and to improve one's own life (Williamson & Milmeister, 2006).

Before the activities, participants declared that the participation in INSPIRIT could be useful for developing personal skills (they list: being more self-confident, leadership, being able to question oneself) to be used also for entering into the labour market.

Experiences,  
competence  
development,  
transferability  
of the  
competences

After the experience, they declare to have found a connection of INSPIRIT with their studies, particularly for those who come from human and social studies. In general, they all declare that INSPIRIT has been an opportunity to see concretely what group dynamics in the university system and in friendly relationships are.

It also emerges that INSPIRIT has impact in first instance on personal development and then on professional one. In general, participants declare "to be enriched much", "to show less fear at certain situations" and therefore "to have exceeded some personal limits".

*"I have always feared confrontation with others, in a whole series of contexts, and instead I understood that it is not necessarily a bad thing, before I saw it as something negative, now not" (Af\_IT2).*

Moreover, participants declare that they "have powered to want to discover", "to travel and to experiment" and "to be most curious, empathic and sociable". For those who had difficulties with English language, the participation permitted to feel more self-confident and to improve a foreign language. Other aspects concern "a greater understanding of the others", "giving solidarity" and "creating new groups of friends". An interviewed declares "to have also learned to safely the environment" and have now more respect for the nature. It emerges also a greater sensitivity, respect and confidence for those who come from other countries. For one of them the participation was important to understand that "sharing an idea without fear the judgment is something enriching".

*"It gives you so much more security, at least this is what it gave me, I learned to manage some situations in a different way, in a better way, with more peace of mind, without panicking perhaps and above all from the point of view of collaboration with an international group this is something*

*that can really help you a lot and the management of complicated situations, time management, there are a lot of things for professional growth, I think it gives a great hand" (Gm\_IT2).*

With respects to the professional development, all respondents declare this training could be useful for a future professional career because it helps to cooperate and manages with a group in the best possible way. One of them affirm that the training "teaches to speak and listen other people and in a future work it could give the necessary leadership useful in the professional field".

*"This type of training partly teaches you to talk to others and partly teaches you to listen above all, and since it was a training seminar aimed at coordinating a field and managing other people, it gives you that leadership that never hurts. especially in group projects, in the organization, it also teaches you a little to manage your freedom [...]" (Af\_IT2).*

Respondents affirm that they used the skills and competences acquired in different areas, specifically within the university and in friendly relationship. As regards the university, they feel more self-confident and capable of speaking in front of lot of people. With respect the friendly relationship, it emerges a greater understanding of the others and the trend to not judge and not to point the finger but the propensity to be flexible, especially during conflict situations. One respondent talks about a dispute with a friend where, thanks to the development acquired, he has understood the necessity to give again trust to his friend.

Respondents think of using the skills and competences acquired in everyday life, they believe these developments "could help to be a better person", "to acquire moral laws" and "to allow to live better with other people". From the Post-interviews it emerges also the wish to acquire more and more skills through the participation in other training course and activities.

The mobility and experimentation of participatory methodologies, specific to the youth field, seem to have favored the creation of meaningful learning contexts, where the participants are able to get out of their habits and their mental habits (Candy, 1991; Rogers, 2005; 2007). The aspect that young people often trace during the interviews concerns above all the methodologies and approaches adopted during the project. The appreciation of the participatory models adopted emerges which, on the one hand, can confuse those who do not know the forms of participation, on the other involve the participants in the implementation of the activities, creating conditions for the exchange of experiences and the deepening of methodologies. The appreciation for non formal methodologies is an element stressed several times during the interviews. The experimentation of participatory methods represents for young people the opportunity to get out of their frames of reference, to broaden their views and to "discover" alternative educational contexts.

The  
"discovery" of  
non formal  
dimension



*The photos show some activities based on non-formal methodology (photos taken in May 2019).*

Before the training, participants hadn't expectations but after the training they are very satisfied. For them the experience was wonderful and they are very happy of being involved. They don't find important downsides, the only "flaws" they identify is "little time", "not enough days and so much activities to do" and "little time to relax". At the same time, they declare that also if the activities were concentrated, they have given without reserve the best. In general, participants never met obstacles, only as regards people who had difficulty with the English language, the groups and the trainers were looking to help, there were no barriers and even if some difficulties emerged (as in language case), they'd be take down.

Central tensions, obstacles, challenges

All respondents had previous experience of volunteering and they declared that the collective dimension is something that represent also other activities they carried out. For those had past experiences in simple volunteer activities (and not in work camp) the training represented a real learning moment, because in simple volunteering everything is much more improvised. For them, INSPIRIT represented the opportunity to discover "what it means to do non-formal education". Instead, for those already took part in work camp and similar activities, the training represented an opportunity to further improve their skills and knowledges.

## 4.2. Research Results 2021

The following section shows the results of the analysis of the two Learning Diaries administered between July and September 2021 and of the Written Reflection produced by the participants at the end of September 2021.

The first part of this section is dedicated to the analysis of the “Learning Diaries Campleader”. They were administered after the participation of young people in a training course to become leaders of international volunteer camps and to prepare them for the coordination of a workcamp during the summer in which young people would play the role of leader.

Learning  
Diaries  
Campleader

The sample of young people who have filled the Learning Diaries Campleader is of 6 person, 3 males and 3 females.

Below we will analyze the results related to the ten thematic areas that the participants have filled in the Learning Diaries Campleader.

The first area on which the analysis focuses is dedicated to personal learning acquired during the training course. In this section it emerges that the participants have learned more about themselves and their abilities. In general, participants declare to be enriched much, to show less fear at certain situations and therefore to have exceeded some personal limits.

Learning  
acquired  
about yourself

A young guy declares how much participation has allowed him to commit himself to overcoming some obstacles due to some personal "limits" and to have realized that he is able to coordinate smaller groups more easily. The coordination experience also served to become aware of deepening some skills, specifically the communicative ones.

*“I have to improve my communication skills with teenagers, because sometimes I didn't know, how can I motivate to them for the activities. It was a big challenge to me, but I had a fear the speaking in front of them, but if I had to lead the small groups, I wasn't shy” [ID3].*

Another participant says that she realizes to be capable of taking responsibility and communicating effectively and confidently.

*“That I am able to take responsibility, especially when it comes to project organizations. I also found that I can confidently conduct a workshop or animations. In addition, I asked myself many questions about conflict resolution and discovered an interest in communication” [ID1].*

Another participant claims to have also learned to consider the dimension of conflict as an essential key to social dynamics and to be able to offer solutions in conflict cases:

*“That I mostly prefer to avoid (or offer solutions to) conflicts than to deal with them” [ID4].*

It seems that the experience of participation to a campleader training has had an important impact, allowing young people to reflect on some skills possessed, very often hidden, and that have emerged during the training. This also allowed them to get to know each other better, to reflect on their abilities and to recognize their strengths and weaknesses.

The second aspect that is addressed in the learning diaries concerns the learning of the aspects that characterize the role of the leader of a volunteer camp. The analysis of the diaries shows that the participants have grasped different aspects of the role of leader and that these aspects will be useful for them to prepare for the coordination that awaits them in the summer.

Learning acquired about the campleader role will have this summer

Young people learned how much important is the role of responsibility and the ability to mediate between different cultures. Others key findings identified are: respect, to be a good mediator in conflictual situation, adaptability, creativity, energy, motivation, to find the balance between coordinating the group without being bossy and being friendly without showing any special behaviours.

The participants clearly remember some specific moments of the training that had special impact on themselves, particularly role-play and team activities on different topics (in particular about discrimination, people who lives at margins, racism and interculturality). These moments transmitted the awareness that doesn't exist boundaries, that there is nothing completely black or white but there are lots of open interpretations. This allowed to have more open mind, more trusting in other people and more respectable for the thoughts of others.

Particularly useful sessions in the Campleader training

Participants emphasize several positive aspects of the training. One of these aspects specifically concerns intercultural dialogue and dialogue with young people from other countries and cultures. 4 out of 6 participants highlight how positive the training was in terms of comparison with the other participants, with whom they exchanged experiences and information on aspects concerning interculturality. The young people point out that this opportunity to get to know the other volunteers and to share different points of view and ideas about their personal experiences was also framed in a pleasant and fun atmosphere.

Positive aspect of the Campleader Training

*"The fact of getting to know other volunteers and sharing different points of view and ideas about our experiences" [ID2].*

*"When we put in practice the games of group cohesiveness and helped the group of animators become closer to each other, so having the proof that they work" [ID4].*

This allowed us to be more curious, empathic and sociable. It emerges also a greater sensitivity, respect and confidence for those come from other countries. For one of them the participation was important to understand that sharing an idea without fear the judgment is something enriching.

As for the negative aspects of the training, the participants do not identify obvious problems, except for two participants who highlighted the presence of a lot of theoretical information and the intensity of the course. Despite this, they declare that also if the activities were concentrated, they have given without reserve the best.

Negative aspect of the campleader training

Two participants highlight their desire to have wanted to deepen to a greater extent the aspects related to multicultural differences and the issues concerning sexism, racism and lack of motivation.

Unanswered questions

*"Not a specific question but to speak more about the different issues that can come up like sexism, racism, lack of motivation etc. and more tools to deal with them" [ID4].*

*“I would have liked to address more the issue of multiculturalism and different expectations around an experience of this type (youth exchange, workcamp...)” [ID2].*

The analysis of Learning Diaries Campleader shows that INSPIRIT has impact on professional sphere. All young people declare this training could be useful for a future professional career and because give the possibility to improve leadership and management skills useful in the professional life. As regards the university, they feel more self-confident, in particular in speaking in public. Young people think of using the skills and competences acquired in everyday life, they believe these developments could help to be a better person, to acquire moral laws and to allow to live better with other people.

Important learning for their studies or their future professional life

*“The fact of being surrounded by people from various parts of the world and working all together is already something that makes you leave your comfort zone and that I also believe is important to face possible fears or concerns regarding our belonging, be it in our country of residence or any other. This in turn expands our professional or academic horizons, which is highly enriching from a personal point of view as well” [ID2].*

*“Understanding the group dynamic, be reactive to solve problems, and that there are a few situations or problems WE can not solve or understand, so Just observations, not panic, and solving problems” [ID5].*

The participants feel themselves excited, curious to lead the workcamp organized for the summer. They say they can't wait to learn new cultures and meet new people from different countries

Expectations for the next activity

*“Take home an enriching experience that will serve me for my professional and personal future because I will have gotten new skills that make me reflect and think” [ID2].*

*“To have different opportunities to do activities, to create a good group dynamic where everyone feels comfortable with each other and feels free to exchange between them their knowledge, culture and feeling” [ID4].*

As regard the analysis of “Learning Diaries Workcamp”, the sample of young people who filled out the WORKCAMP learning diaries is of 4 subjects, 3 males and 1 female. Below we will analyze the results related to the four thematic areas present in the LD (New Knowledge; group dynamic; camp leading; summary). Each thematic area contains within it some questions related to the area in question.

Learning Diaries Workcamp

The first area on which the analysis of the LD Workcamps focuses is dedicated to the new knowledge acquired during the coordination of the workcamp. The participants declare that they have acquired management skills concerning the possibility of organizing and managing a volunteer camp. The skills acquired refer, on the one hand, to the logistical organization that allowed to organize the workcamp (accountancy, creation of the program, preparation of the place, talking to the locals, shopping, check local activities, organize food quantities). On the

New knowledge

other hand, there is also the perception that the participants have acquired practical skills relating, for example, to the possibility of trying their hand at repairing a wall or in artistic skills:

*"I learned how to repair a wall and I improved myself in wall painting" [ID5].*

*"I learned to organize food quantities and structure a day for several people. I also learned to take place as a leading role, the responsibilities that come within such as Accountancy, Communication with partners in politics/Logistics, being the person in charge when it comes to daily questions. Also preparing the logistics offered me a wide range of new skills" [ID1].*

Regarding the theme of sustainability, the analysis of the diaries shows a positive result in this direction. Some young people participated and led, during the coordination of the workcamp, some workshops about environment and recycling and about the care of the environment in Europe. This has allowed them to become more aware of their actions towards the environment and to realize how their attitudes towards the environment can be dangerous. In addition, this knowledge was amplified due to the fact that the workcamps took place in campsites and in places where all participants were in contact with nature.

Learning  
about  
sustainability

*"Living in a campsite and without the comforts that this represents, I realized the excessive use we make of water and how many things we take for granted in our daily lives that we should not" [ID1].*

The analysis of the diaries shows that, thanks to the experience of coordination, the participants have acquired evident learning about different cultures. They claim to have learned a lot from the participants from other countries, and to have also reflected a lot on the comparison with their own culture. In addition to learning more about the history or food, for example, of the countries of the participants, it was important because they also learned values such as tolerance or empathy. It emerged, for young people involved in the workcamp, that differences are not a wall to get to know others and that there are fewer barriers than they usually should be.

Learning  
about  
different  
cultures

*"I learned about Ukrainian cultures, also I well learned about cultural food differences, in Ukraine the meat consumption is very different than in Spain for instance. We learned also about daily behaviors which I personally would find disrespectful but in other cultures its obliged. Looking into somebodies eyes while talking in Maroc is for example disrespectful, I do it out of respect. Also the position of the woman in some countries, is different than I thought" [ID1].*

Young people highlight how participation in training has been an opportunity around which to acquire greater awareness of their educational, training and professional perspectives and to plan future paths and the acquisition of further skills. Respondents say that what they learn during training is also crucial for future professional development. This is because it helps to compare oneself with others, to perceive oneself as part of a group, to take initiatives and collaborate.

Learning  
useful for  
studies or  
future  
professional  
life

The analysis shows that talking to a group of people and conducting discussions about collective decision-making are aspects from which participants can take advantage to pursue their future professional career. In addition, teamwork skills and communication skills with people of different nationalities represent good values for an international career. Living with people of different nationalities and understandings, often faced with unexpected situations, already shows a certain degree of adaptability, initiative and responsibility that can be relevant for future professional life.

Along the diaries it is also highlighted how the fact of leading an intercultural group of people with different languages, cultural and social levels has allowed to develop the ability to listen to others, to understand the needs of others and flexibility during the workflow.

The analysis also highlights the link between training and the characteristics of one's own training path:

*“In the case of wanting to resume my studies, I think that this experience has taught me a lot about the human mind and its different perceptions (in addition to the exhaustion that many times this entails) so I think I would go more towards the field of social work or psychology (I have already done my studies in political science)” [ID2].*

*“It was not an easy experience that put me at the limits of my capabilities but at the same time it was great to make me know better myself and what I'm able to handle and to do. I improved a lot my tolerance and stress management and I think that was an experience that made me more aware and also stronger and more resilient. All of these are for me important skills for my futures professional life” [ID5].*

Shortly, the participants share the idea that experience can be used to their advantage regarding their professional/personal life in the short or long term.

In general, participants say that leading a group was a new and stimulating learning, while highlighting how complicated and challenging the coordination of a group of young people was.

Group  
dynamic

They understood the importance of being patient, of being able to maintain the dynamic group and that the dynamics that can be triggered within a group are constantly changing and that it is necessary to be a good mediator to be able to contain any tensions and conflicts.

Another aspect that is highlighted by one participant is that, in this type of Projects, the extraordinary thing is the possibility of acquiring skills that we get to learn from others, and this is a great richness since the learning is mutual and enriches both the leader and the young participants.

Regarding the management of conflicts within the group, the participants stated how communication has proved to be the winning weapon to be able to manage conflicts within the group. A participant declares to have used, at first, patience, trying to make the participants understand the importance of communication and the possibility of being able to place themselves in the position of mediator. One participant stated that he managed the conflicts

Conflicts  
management

by talking to all the people involved in the conflict and making sure that they could talk and explain themselves and make them understand the rules to respect each other.

*“Patience was something I had to work with during the labor camps. My space alone and time for myself were something I used not to overload myself. As for the participants, I have always tried to show them how important communication is in case of conflict between them, in which I would take a position as a mediator. Fortunately, I didn't have many” [ID3].*

Another participant points out that he was very careful to prevent the tension from reaching a point of violence, thus managing to put everyone safe. Through dialogue He spoke to all the people involved, letting them talk and explain themselves. In this way he created for them some methods to resolve the conflict, also reminding them of the rules to respect each other.

As for the perception of their role as a leader, the participants express the feeling that it was a very challenging role, so much so that it created situations of stress and use of a lot of energy. Playing the role of leader was difficult for all the participants, who declared that they had done their best to be able to respond to all the prerogatives that this role entailed. This has needed a great deal of responsibility and a sense of having an obligation to respond to the pressures of the decision-making process. As for the fact that the role has changed during the workcamp, 2 out of 4 participants declare that it has not changed much, while another participant says that it has changed and has adapted to the personality of the group depending on the needs and activities put in place.

Camp leading

Perception of one's role

*“I realized this from the beginning because unfortunately you are seen as the head of the camp who can respond to everything every time. I found it stressful at every beginning and it took a lot of energy to communicate that projects are not Holiday fields but have deeper meanings than collective life! My role has never changed even though the connections with the participants have turned into friendships” [ID1].*

*“I think I did the best I could and I am happy with my work; in the end it turned out to be exhaustive. The role changed and also adapted according to the personality of the group as a whole and the things to improve that I got to learn between one workcamp and the next” [ID2].*

*“I don't like the word leader. During the workcamp I was a reference for the participants, and for all the decisions we were all the same. No hierarchy. The participants trusted me and respected me such as each one of us did with all the people in the group. I was aware of my role and I was available for the group as much as possible. The role doesn't change a lot, there was a good balance in this” [ID5].*

The coordination of the workcamp seems to have had a particularly significant impact on the participants' ability to get to know themselves better. The experience of coordination as a leader greatly encouraged self-reflection and self-discovery. Participants claim to feel more confident and have exceeded certain limits. A picture emerged that experience contributed significantly to improving personal skills, helping to measure their patience, listening, empathy, their ability to manage stress. They have learned that they used to underestimate themselves

Self learning

and that they now feel they know each other better. The experience helped the participants to discover their strengths, understanding how to solve problems and face challenges.

*“I have a limit of energy. I can communicate very well. I seem like a charismatic person. I am not feeling intimidated by different cultures. I depend my own values in comparison with values from other cultures. I can hardly say no. I rather please people Than taking steps back” [ID1].*

It emerged a framework in which the coordination of the workcamp often confronted young leaders at challenging events. One participant affirmed that she had a problem with the co-leader who titled her as not responsible enough, she addressed the situation by talking to the director and asking for his opinion, the situation was resolved by continuing to work with the co-leader without talking too much. Another participant says they initially had trouble speaking or explaining something in front of an audience. For another participant the biggest challenge was to solve all the unexpected and tense time while keeping the work as usual. The great difficulty was the extra work, because the workflow was already stressful and loaded. The way to face this difficulty was calmly, without panic, and facing all situations one by one, doing what was possible and also accepting the change and default of the same experience.

Challenges

One participant had some problems with the co-leader, the other young people highlighted among the negative aspects the great weight of the work to be done and the little free time available, some also list the stress, the weight of responsibility that the group tends to generate in the leader. Only in one case, the lack of organization is highlighted.

Negative aspect of leading the workcamp

As for the positive aspects of workcamp coordination, the possibility of acquiring skills and knowledge related to both the individual sphere and that of relationships emerges. Young people show that they have had the opportunity to increase language skills and seeing yourself solving problems successful.

Positive aspect of leading the workcamp

They also show the possibility of having confronted and having known many slices of life, many stories and many experiences and of having learned through the comparison with different cultures and languages.

*“The bonds that you manage to create with other participants and co-workers, and the experiences that you live with them” [ID5].*

*“Knowing people, cultures, languages, and having fun” [ID3].*

Now it will be analyzing the evidence of the "Written Reflections" carried out by the participants during the final meeting that took place in Frankfurt from 25 to 30 September 2021. The participants, through the production of flipcharts, described their experience and reflected about the coordination of the workcamp and the most representative aspects of the training, as well as the knowledge and skills acquired.

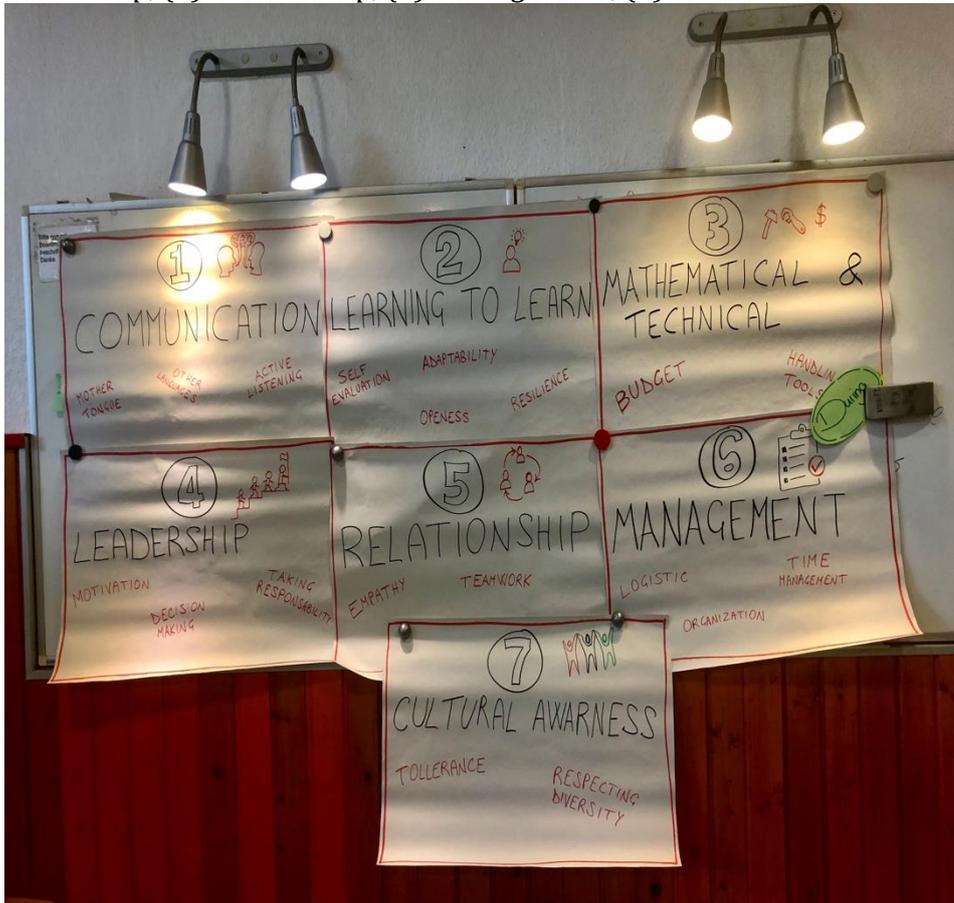
Written Reflections

The most relevant aspect emerged from the written reflection is related to the competences and skills acquired during the training. During the activities carried out it clearly emerged how much a workcamp contributes to strengthening competences as a set of knowledge, skills and values (personal ethics, attitudes that influence skills). During the written reflections participants begin by getting comfortable to start reflecting and thinking back to their coordination experience. The young people described on a flipchart everything they did during

Skills and competence acquired

their workcamp and starting from all the activities carried out, they identified the skills acquired in terms of skills of:

- (1) communication, (2) learning to learn, (3) mathematical and technical, (4) leadership, (5) relationship, (6) management, (7) cultural awareness.



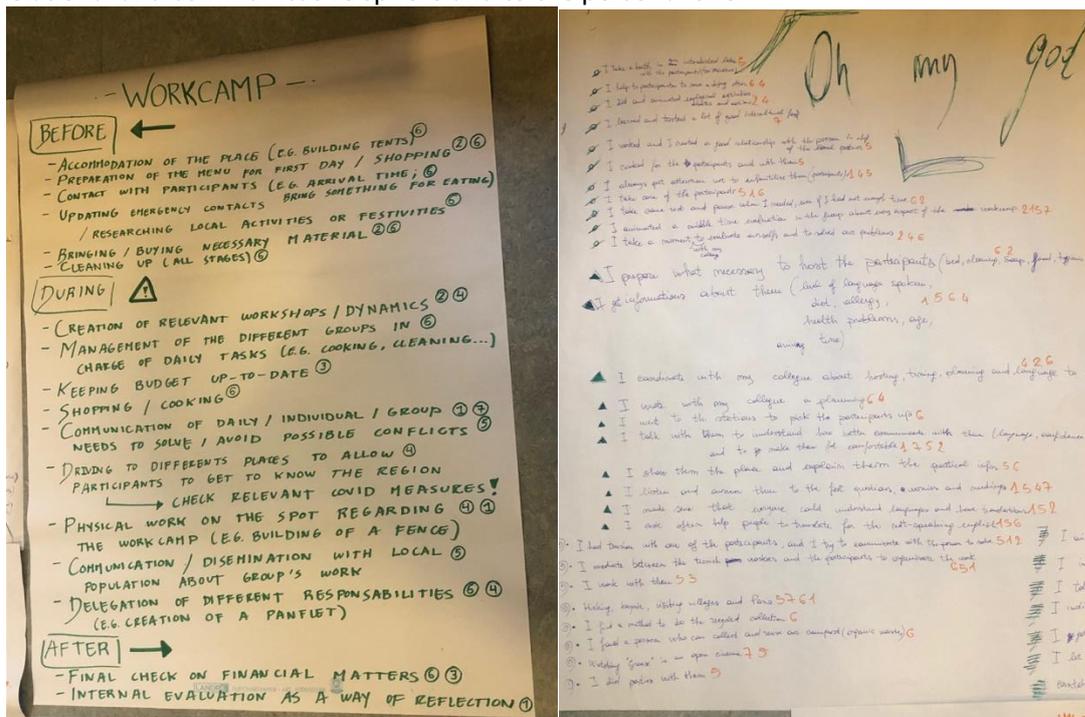
The photo shows the set of skills that participants could identified in their experience of leading a workcamp (photo taken in September 2021).

Starting from the description of their workcamp experience, participants are invited to reflect on which of the skills illustrated (*communication, learning to learn, mathematical and technical, leadership, relationship, management, cultural awareness*). They are able to identify in their narration of the workcamp experience and to mark the numbers that refer to those skills in their flipcharts.

From the analysis of the flipcharts, it emerged greater learning, in order of importance, for the skills related to relational, management and communication skills. Leadership skills follow and, with a lower relevance, skills related to "learning to learn"; "Cultural awareness" and, with even lower values, "Mathematical and technical skills".

It is very important to highlight how the workcamp represents a way to increase both the skills that have to do with the relational dimension (relationship and communication, which are very recurrent in the description of the participants), and those that concern the personal sphere. In fact, the acquisition of management skills represents an element that the participants also mention during the diaries. We could conclude by saying that the coordination experience

seems to have had an evident impact and led to the development of skills both related to the relational and communicative sphere and to the personal one.



The photos show some flipchart produced by participants during the activity aimed at identifying the skills acquired (photos taken in September 2021).

## 5. Summary and outlook

This section analyses summary and outlook from 2019 and 2021 research cycle.

It is worth to summarize the results the interviews carried out, in order to highlight the central aspects of the qualitative analysis of the workcamp and to provide an interpretation as complete as possible of the results.

Summary and outlook 2019

From the analysis it emerges a representation of the work field as a place, space and opportunity (Giovannini, 1997) for young people to build social relationships.

All the volunteers have shown stimulus, support and collaboration and have committed themselves with all their strength to achieve the objectives set by the training. The relationship with the other volunteers, with the trainers, the enthusiasm with which everyone participated in the training experience, the organization of free time and their roles, are all elements that have returned a positive outcome and guaranteed success of the workcamp.

It was interesting to note the importance of conflict as an engine of change: during some activities, in fact, young people strongly expressed their positions and asserted their ideas and points of view with resolve. A very interesting element also concerned the strength of the bonds established between the participants. It emerged that young people have learned to know many sections of life, many stories and many experiences; together they laughed, played, but above all learned, together they talked, conversed, drew, wrote, photographed, attached sheets, cut, coloured. Together they used the common territory of the English language to communicate.

The analysis also shows a positive picture of the training experience in terms of development of the individual dimension. It should be noted that the interviews have shown that the basis of participation in the training is the sharing with other young people of experiences and experiences related to the world of volunteering and social promotion, from which the participants hope to be able to develop learning related to the area in which they are directly involved. At the end of the training, a picture emerged characterized by an overall satisfaction of the expectations of young people: they declared that they had developed transversal skills, mainly linked to the individual dimension and underlined an increase and consolidation of pro-social skills, such as cooperation, empathy, listening. The analysis of the interviews revealed that the experience had, on an individual level, evident effects, as well as on the development of specific skills, on the intercultural dimension and on the strengthening of personality, autonomy, responsibility and the ability to work in a team. and with young people from other countries.

Another interesting element that emerged clearly from the interviews carried out before the training activity concerns the level of understanding of young people about non-formal education and youth policies. Almost all young people, at the time of the first administration, had already taken part in experiences attributable to these two specific areas, it is only during the interviews that young people seem to realize that they are taking part in a process they were unaware of. This specific aspect makes it possible to highlight how much effort is needed in relation to processes for the enhancement of youth policy and mobility initiatives, mostly in the phase of promoting the objectives of the projects. This would allow for a greater knowledge of the methods used during the training and of the opportunities that can be achieved by participating and which, inevitably, constitute an excellent personal investment.

Young people also appreciated INSPIRIT's initiative of wanting to recognize non-formal educational experiences in the formal sphere. Precisely with respect to the effort that the project makes, it would be necessary to obtain greater recognition of these paths, and not only in the public sector (schools and universities), but also in the private sector of services and businesses. This would make it possible to bring non formal training opportunities closer to formal study paths by supporting concrete measures that guarantee unique models of recognition that can be used throughout Europe and that certify the skills acquired "throughout the course of life".

It is interesting to compare the results of the two diaries and of the written reflection, in order to highlight the central aspects of the qualitative analysis of the workcamp and to provide an interpretation as complete as possible that can answer the research questions. The analysis of the Learning Diaries Campleader has made it possible to notice that the young people who participated in the training course have gained in terms of personal learning, learning to know a little more about themselves and their abilities, taking responsibility and feeling able to communicate effectively and confidently. They also state that the training has allowed them to understand the role that a leader should have, including respect, the ability to be a good mediator when there are conflicts, adaptability, creativity, energy, motivation, to find the balance between coordinating the group without being bossy and being friendly without showing any special behaviors.

Among the positive aspects of the training emerged a particular attention to intercultural dialogue, highlighting how positive the training was in terms of comparison with the other participants, with whom experiences and information on aspects concerning interculturality

were exchanged. Participants are excited and curious to undertake the experience of coordinating the workcamp that is scheduled for the summer.

Regarding the results of the "Learning Diaries Workcamp", it is interesting to underline how the coordination experience has been effective in making oneself aware of one's own individual abilities and talents. A picture emerged characterized by an overall satisfaction of the expectations of young people: they declared that they had developed transversal skills, mainly linked to the individual dimension, and underlined an increase and consolidation towards pro-social skills, such as cooperation, empathy, listening. The analysis of the diaries has in fact made it possible to note that the experience has produced, at the individual level, evident effects, as well as on the development of specific skills, on the intercultural dimension and on the strengthening of personality, autonomy, responsibility, and ability to work in groups and with young people from other countries. Another aspect to keep in mind concerns the greater awareness of their educational, training and professional perspectives and the planning of their future itinerary: all young people, during the diaries compiled after the coordination of the workcamp, believe that the knowledge and skills acquired are essential to build and/or enrich their training baggage, especially in view of the future working career.

With respect to the competences and skills acquired during the training, the evidences of the "Written Reflections" clearly show how much a workcamp contributes to strengthening competences as a set of knowledge, values (personal ethics, attitudes that influence skills). Starting from the analysis of the flipcharts, in general terms, greater learning emerged for the skills related to the sphere of relational, management and communication skills. Leadership skills follow and, with a lower relevance, skills related to "learning to learn"; "Cultural awareness" and, with even lower values, "Mathematical and technical skills". It is very important to highlight how the workcamp represents a way to increase both the skills that have to do with the relational dimension (relationship and communication, which are very recurrent in the description of the participants), and those that concern the personal sphere. In fact, the achievement of management skills represents an element that the participants also mention during the diaries. We could conclude by saying that the coordination experience seems to have had an evident impact and led to the development of skills both related to the relational and communicative sphere and to the personal one.

To conclude, the development of leadership skills, active citizenship, cultural diversity, skills in the field of personal development, communication, declared by young respondents are often missing in formal curricula, but the research results show how substantial their impact is on the learning of young people and on their training courses. It is believed that one of the ways to make all this clear to institutions of all types and levels may consist in a clear and thorough description also by research. For example, analysing an activity and processing the learning outcomes of the participants qualitatively and in detail (as we tried to do in the course of this research) would allow to enhance the impact of these activities and bring them to the attention of external actors.

In this way, the formal system and universities could take more into consideration the representations of non-formal education, which currently perhaps still appear too general, to think (finally) of real recognition as part of their training curricula.

The challenge, therefore, is to (re) know and make known - through an effort coming both from research and from all the actors involved - these opportunities, always keeping the quality level of the projects high.

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# *Conclusions: Recognizing Developments in International Volunteer Workcamp Leaders*

*BÁRTA, Ondřej*

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This research volume represents work done in three countries (the Czech Republic, Germany, and Italy) in course of two years (2019 and 2021) and follows educational cycles of international volunteer workcamp leaders. As is apparent from the different sections of this publication, four researchers conducted data collection and analysis in three different countries (one in the Czech Republic, one in Germany, and two in Italy), but they all adhered to the same methodological design, and followed the same research questions: Those defined by all of them in international meetings at the onset of the project. The conducted research was qualitative in nature and hence represents something rarely seen outside of the large quantitative surveys: Gathering and analysing data in three different mother tongues while pursuing one goal and ultimately contributing to this final research report. Such rare qualitative research design is not without its perils. Given the nature of the qualitative data, one risks having a wide variety of findings that are difficult to compare across the countries, and hence of use only in the cultural context they were collected in. To avoid this pitfall, methodology was carefully designed, including the research instruments which were eventually translated and used for country-specific data collection. Data were still analysed in the mother tongue, with the research reports then translating the findings back to English, giving them the form in which they can be found in this research volume.

Bearing this research context in mind, it is all the more surprising to find large sections of the findings to be overlapping across the national reports, as it happened in this research volume. Work of four researchers conducted in three different European languages, and based on data from three distinct cultural contexts, all closing in on a set of common developments in international volunteer workcamp leaders. Before outlining these common findings below, it is useful to brood over what the overlapping results suggest. We can eliminate the possibility of researchers influencing each other during the data analysis as they did not meet until preliminary findings have already been drafted in each of the countries. Therefore, we are left with a strong possibility that the rather universal model of the workcamp leaders' cycle that is applied in all three countries leads to very similar learning outcomes across the different cultural contexts in which it is applied. Taking this thought even further, this may suggest that similar learning outcomes can be expected also in young people taking part in similar workcamp leaders' cycles in countries beyond the Czech Republic, Germany, and Italy. This is an important outcome of this research as it suggests that **the blueprint of the international volunteer workcamp leaders' cycle can be applied in different cultural contexts and still inspire positive learning outcomes in the involved young people.**

Common findings found across the three national reports fall into the following categories, and are elaborated on in detail below:

- multicompetence development,
- multitude of learning contexts, and
- high satisfaction of participants.

First and foremost, **participants in all three countries indicated developments in a wide range of various competences, a phenomenon we call a “multicompetence development” in this report.** In practical terms, this means that in course of the workcamp leaders’ cycle, the participants refined, as a whole or in part, almost all of the eight key competences for lifelong learning as defined by the Council of the European Union (2018), namely:

- literacy competence,
- multilingual competence,
- mathematical competence and competence in science, technology and engineering,
- digital competence,
- personal, social and learning to learn competence,
- citizenship competence,
- entrepreneurship competence, and
- cultural awareness and expression competence.

There are, in particular, three areas in which the participants seem to be aware of particularly refined competences: leadership, intercultural domain, and active citizenship. All of these domains are closely related to the nature of the international workcamp leadership experience and are notably developed in combination of different learning contexts as described below.

Two additional vital aspects of the multicompetence development need to be underlined: full competence development, and development of competences underrepresented in the formal education system. **Participants often describe their competence development as a full one, i.e., as including all four key competence components: knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values.** The international workcamp leadership experience allows them to develop competences fully, not limiting them to only the knowledge aspect which heavily dominates the aim of the formal education systems, but allowing them to also hone their skills, and to think deeper on the attitudes and values related to given competences. This full competence development is easily visible in case of the three prominent development areas: leadership, intercultural domain, and active citizenship. Apart from gaining new knowledge on these subjects during certain phases of the workcamp leaders’ cycle (e.g., at the training for leaders), the participants learn practical skills (e.g., during the workcamp itself), and subsequently also reflect on their attitudes and values (e.g., during the final international reflection session).

Moreover, **many of the competences that the participants develop are either completely missing from the formal education curricula or are underrepresented in there.** In this context, the workcamp leaders’ cycle is a unique opportunity to develop these competences as they would otherwise be largely neglected during the formal education pathway. As examples of these competences, again, the most prominent areas developed by the participants can be stated: leadership, intercultural domain, and active citizenship. None of these areas present key and explicit objectives in mainstream formal education, despite the apparent advantages of these competences to the young people and society at large.

**Both of the aforementioned points (full competence development and development of such competences which are underrepresented in the formal education systems) suggest that the workcamp leadership experience has a high potential to successfully complement the formal education pathways of the young people.**

**Another notable area which is represented in research reports from all three countries emphasizes the multitude of learning contexts which occur during the workcamp leadership experience, and which support the multicompetence development described above.** The whole cycle of the workcamp leadership experience contains several main phases (the training for leaders, the workcamp itself, and the final international reflection session) in which non-formal methods are combined with informal learning. Within the non-formal learning and informal learning opportunities, the young people enjoy some specific formats that help them move even further in their development: peer learning, work-based learning, hands-on learning, experimentation, and (guided) reflection. Peer learning takes place in virtually all phases of the workcamp leaders' cycle as all of them contain the element of group work, bringing people from different walks of life together and providing them with a space for interaction and bonding, and most importantly with a space to learn from each other's experience. Work-based learning is most heavily present during the workcamp itself as the leaders focus on achieving their goal: successfully implement the international workcamp itself. This work-based learning environment is rich in developing various competences, as shown in all three national reports. Hands-on learning takes place during all phases of the workcamp leaders' cycle as many of the non-formal methods are based on the direct activities implemented by the young people themselves, either as simulations, or as various tasks preparing them for the next steps along the way. Experimentation is also present in all phases of the cycle, and it allows young people to be creative, try out new approaches, and use mistakes not as something they are punished for, but as something they learn from. And lastly, reflection occurs naturally throughout the whole leaders' cycle on the individual level but is further strengthened by guided exercises during the training of leaders and during the final international reflection session. These reflective exercises are vital for the young people to become aware of their own learning progress as well as to realize transferability of the competences they gained into other contexts (work life, personal life, education). **Apart from the peer learning aspect, none of the other learning contexts are regularly used in the mainstream formal education system which, again, creates potential for the workcamp leadership experience to become a valued complementary learning opportunity.**

Very high satisfaction of young people with undertaking the workcamp leadership experience also occurred in all three national reports. This suggests that in all three countries, quality workcamp cycles are implemented, and **based on the research from all three countries, it seems three particular sets of aspects contribute heavily to the success of the workcamp leaders' cycles in the eyes of the young people:**

- **fun, enthusiasm, and emotions,**
- **groups, friends, and bonds,**
- **new experience, new cultures, and new relationships.**

Young people talk about the fun they had during the different phases of the workcamp cycle, describe the enthusiasm of their own and their peers, and also a wide range of other emotions that are linked to their own personal experience of the process. They also appreciate not being alone in the process, working in groups, meeting new friends, and overall creating bonds to people. They also are seeking and appreciating experiencing something new and out of the ordinary, meeting and exploring new

cultures, and creating new relationships to others, to themselves, and to the places they visit. All of these aspects are important part of the non-formal methods used in the training of leaders and in the final international reflection session, but they also occur naturally during the workcamp itself. **As is the case in previous paragraphs, even here it needs to be noted that these aspects are hardly dominating the formal education system, and as such create a welcome mix for the young people to attract them to the learning opportunities within the workcamp cycle.**

After summarizing the main research findings overlapping in all three national research reports and pointing out opportunities for complementing the formal education system, it is important to outline the reasons for which **recognition of the workcamp leadership experience in the formal education system benefits all actors involved: the students, the formal education institutions, and the society at large.** In case of students, the workcamp leaders' cycle offers them a chance for multicompetence development in a multitude of learning contexts, and all of that combined with a mix of aspects they themselves find favourable and attractive, such as fun, bonds, and new cultures. In case of the formal education institutions, the workcamp leadership cycle offers them a unique internship opportunity which not only supports their students in competence development, but also improves the profile of the institutions themselves as such unique internship opportunities are, as of today, rather rare. And lastly, the society benefits from the workcamps not only immediately (through the results of the concrete workcamps), but also in the long run as the young people who undergo the leadership experience become more active in the public sphere, are more likely to take up responsibility for the public matters, and better align their values with those of freedom, diversity, and democracy.

It is the hope of the whole team behind the INSPIRIT project that this research publication helps highlight the workcamp leadership educational cycle as not only viable, but also unique and highly desirable learning and internship opportunity. We hope that the abovementioned developments of the young people who have gone through the process become inspiration to further young people to seek such opportunities in the future. We also hope that these research findings encourage the formal educational institutions to officially recognize such opportunities as part of the educational pathway of young people. In the same way we hope the formal educational institutions to become partners with the organizations implementing the workcamp leadership educational cycles in order to mutually support each other in their respective work.

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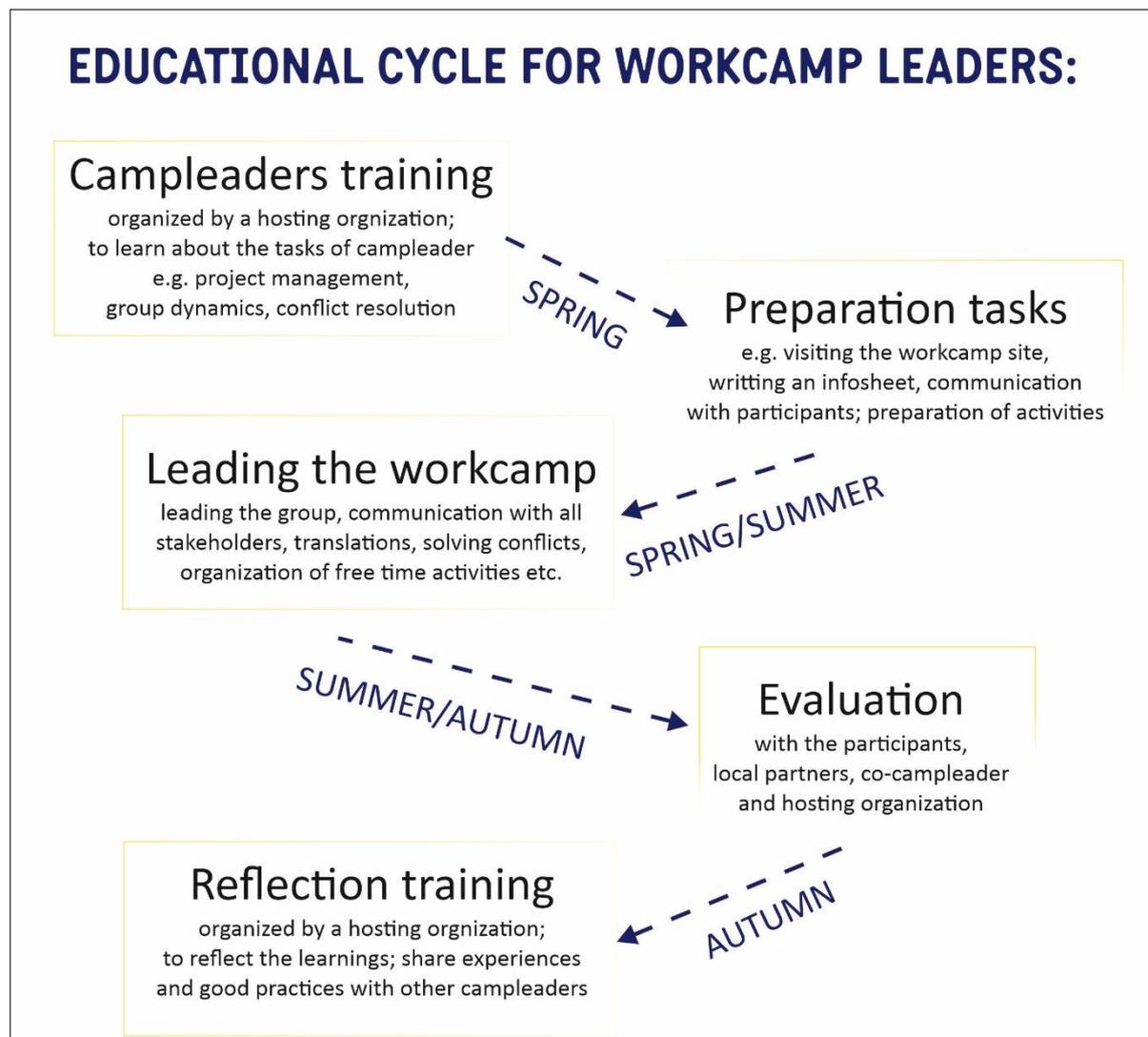
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## *Annexes*

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## Pre-interview Guidelines

### A. Introduction

Before the interview itself commences and the recording is started, the interviewee is informed about:

- The focus of the interview (We will be talking about...);
- Reasons for recording the interview (further analyses...);
- Consent with the recording (Consent will be recorded later on);
- Anonymity of the interview;
- Voluntary nature of the interview (interview can end at any moment and no answers are forced on the interviewee);
- Terminology (e.g. INSPIRIT, camp leader, etc.);
- The possibility to ask further questions now before the interview starts (Would you like to ask me anything before we start?).

### B. Interview

*(At this point, interview starts, recording starts, and the interviewee is asked about the consent with the recording.)*

- Could you please tell me who you are and where you come from?
  - *(Anything from family background, current studies, interests, anything that comes to the interviewee's mind.)*
- Could you please tell me about your experience with stays abroad, if you have any?
- Could you please tell me about your volunteering experience, if you have any?
- Could you please tell me how you got to know about INSPIRIT and why you applied? What are your reasons for participating?
- Could you please describe what you think will happen in INSPIRIT over the next couple of months? What do you imagine the project will look like? Which parts do you look forward to and why? Which parts do you fear/have worries about, and why?
- Imagine: you are at the end of the INSPIRIT and everything went absolutely fabulously according to your highest expectations. What are you taking away from INSPIRIT with you? What is the connection of these things to your studies and professional development? How about personal development?
- Could you please tell me about your experience with similar projects from your past, if you have any?
- *(Aiming at previous project experience: youth projects, volunteering projects, camp leading in the past, anything relevant.)*
- You have already attended the first teambuilding workshop: What do you think about the group of INSPIRIT participants? How about friendships and networking at the first INSPIRIT event?
- How was the first INSPIRIT even for you, overall? What were the highlights? What were the downsides?

- What recognition of your participation in INSPIRIT do you expect at your university? Will you receive ECTS credits, will your skills and developments be recognized, will it be added to your academic record in any way, or will it be mentioned in your Transcript of Records<sup>10</sup>?
- How have you shared news about your participation in INSPIRIT with your friends, family, teachers? What have you talked about?
- Is there anything else you would like to share with me concerning INSPIRIT at the moment?

### **C. Conclusion**

After the recording has been stopped, the following occurs:

- Interviewee is asked about the experience (How was the interview for you?);
- The future research outline is repeated and interviewee's role in them is highlighted (what happens next, when do you meet again, why);
- Interviewee is asked for questions (Is there something you would like to ask me about before we finish up?);
- Thanks, and goodbyes.

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<sup>10</sup> This is a document used in the EU as an appendix to the university diploma, summarizing the proceedings of the studies.

## Post-interview Guidelines

### A. Introduction

Before the interview itself commences and the recording is started, the interviewee is informed about:

- The focus of the interview (We will be talking about...);
- Reasons for recording the interview (further analyses...);
- Consent with the recording (Consent will be recorded later on);
- Anonymity of the interview;
- Voluntary nature of the interview (interview can end at any moment and no answers are forced on the interviewee);
- Terminology (e.g. INSPIRIT, camp leader, etc.);
- The possibility to ask further questions now before the interview starts (Would you like to ask me anything before we start?).

### B. Interview

*(At this point, interview starts, recording starts, and the interviewee is asked about the consent with the recording.)*

- Could you please tell me what important things happened in your life since we last spoke to each other?
  - *(Aim is to figure out potential other influences, such as becoming a politician, leaving university, other projects interviewee is attending, etc.)*
- Could you please tell me about your NEW experience with stays abroad, if you have any?
- Could you please tell me about your NEW volunteering experience, if you have any?
- You have attended the INSPIRIT training lately, how was it? What were the highlights? What were the downsides? How did the experience compare to your expectations? Were they fulfilled? Were they not? Why?
- What are you taking away from INSPIRIT training with you? What is the connection of these things to your studies and professional development? How about personal development? Is there any other important area of development we have not spoken about?
- How do you think these developments could be helpful to you in your personal or professional life? How have you used any of the new skills/competences/developments in your everyday life so far? How do you plan to use these skills/competences/developments in the future?
- Speaking about what you are taking away from the INSPIRIT training, what were the important “learning moments” for you? How did you get to the things you have described (the ones you are taking away from the training)? What was helping you in your development? What obstacles were there?
- How does the INSPIRIT training compare to your past experiences from similar projects/activities? What is different? Different good? Different bad?
- How did the INSPIRIT training connect to the first activity of the project (the teambuilding where we first met)? Were there any advantages to having both activities? Disadvantages?
- What do you think about the group of INSPIRIT participants? How about friendships and networking at the INSPIRIT events?

- How have you shared news about your participation in INSPIRIT with your friends, family, teachers? What have you talked about?
- Could you tell me what summer workcamp you have chosen to lead? What are your expectations and fears concerning the upcoming summer workcamp you will be leading? What preparations have taken place so far?
- Is there anything else you would like to share with me concerning INSPIRIT at the moment?

### **C. Conclusion**

After the recording has been stopped, the following occurs:

- Interviewee is asked about the experience (How was the interview for you?);
- The future research outline is repeated and interviewee's role in them is highlighted (what happens next, when do you meet again, why);
- Interviewee is asked for questions (Is there something you would like to ask me about before we finish up?);
- Thanks, and goodbyes.

## Learning Diary: After Workcamp Leader Training (Spring 2021)

1. What have you learned during the campleader training about yourself?
2. What have you learned about the campleader role you will have this summer? List three key findings you are taking away and tell us why these are important to you.
3. What sessions did you find particularly useful in the campleader training and what did you learn in these sessions?
4. What was the most positive aspect of the campleader training?
5. What was the most negative aspect of the campleader training?
6. Are there still any unanswered questions that you feel should have been answered during the campleader training? If yes, what are they?
7. Did you have any „Aha-moment“ during the training? If so, what was it?
8. What things did you learn that could be important for your studies or your future professional life?
9. Which expectations do you have regarding the next activity (leading a Workcamp)?
10. Is there something else you want to share with us? 😊

## Learning Diary: After Workcamp (Summer 2021)

1. Have you learnt anything regarding the work part of the workcamp? If yes, what?
2. Have you learnt anything on the theme of sustainability? If yes, what?
3. Have you learnt anything about different cultures? If yes, what?
4. What things did you learn that could be important for your studies or your future professional life?
5. Have you learnt anything from the group?
6. How have you managed conflicts within the group?
7. How did you perceive your role as camp leader? Could you realize it? Did you have to adapt it? Did the role change over time?
8. What did you learn about yourself?
9. How was the cooperation with your co leader? What did you learn from that? What could you have done differently?
10. Were there situations that were challenging for you? If yes, how did you cope with them?
11. What was the most negative aspect of leading the workcamp?
12. What was the most positive aspect of leading the workcamp?
13. Did you have an „Aha-moment“ during the workcamp?
14. What are the three key lessons you take away from the experience of leading the workcamp?
15. Which experiences from the campleaders training were helpful during your workcamp?
16. Is there anything else you would like to share with us?

## Written Reflection Session: Methodology Outline

Session Outline for International Reflection Meeting in Germany, September 2021

Authors: Selina-Zoë Weber (IBG) and Mario Mormille (YAP)

### Aims

1. PAX reflect upon their past experiences and determine personal learning moments
2. PAX recognize their own learning curve and reflect upon their personal growth and development throughout and after the camp
3. PAX are more empowered and reassured about their competencies

### Time

2 hours / 120 min

### Material/ Preparation

Material per PAX: 1 Flipchartpaper, Pen, comfy spot to sit and write

General: Flipcharts "Competences" + "Categories"

### Disclaimer on method source

This method is a mix of theoretical and practical input and has been influenced by several other methods. The used competency groups are loosely based on *"I've experienced"* (Lunaria) and SALTO material

## Instruction

### 1. Skills and competences - what is it actually?

present definitions of skills and competences - what's the difference?

- competences: a cluster of knowledge, attitude and skill

knowledge: the theory - relevant info

skill: practical - the ability to perform

attitude: internal - values, ethic, principles

- Workcamps provide unique chances to increase competences and to develop new skills

→ **Skills**

→ **competence**

What we are able

How well we perform

to do

### 2. Mental exercise “back to camp”

In order to help the PAX remember their experience, the facilitator conducts a dream sequence. The dream sequence (see example below) should set the PAX in a relaxed mind which helps them “go back” to their camps.

It is important that the facilitator uses some guiding phrases and examples to help the PAX remember certain facets and aspects of camp life which they might have forgotten / considered as not that important.

Some general pointers for the dreamsequence:

- Start off by establishing a relaxed and quite mood / atmosphere
- PAX should lie down and close their eyes
- create a frame vague enough to leave enough space for PAX to fill in with their own camp memories → do not be too specific

Dream Sequence (Example)

*approx. 10-15 min.*

*Dream sequence (example, adjust as needed)*

*! speak slowly and use your best narrator voice, use breaks to let images sink in, don't rush!*

*Lie down...*

*breath in, breath out... .... relax .... just breath and let your mind wander...*

*It's summer*

*You are lying on a big field*

*Feel the sun on your face, the warmth on your skin*

*Feel the ground underneath you*

*Do you hear the soft buzz of the bees and the chirping of the birds?*

*(it is possible to use appropriate music to help set the mood (not too loud, with good timing))*

*Take a deep breath and taste the scent of the flowers.*

*You can hear the wind blowing through the trees, the flop...flop...flop... of a game of badminton and distant laughter.*

*Your whole camp is there, just chilling at the lake and enjoying the afternoon.*

*You had a long day of work. It was hot and sticky and exhausting.*

*The cold shower never felt better.*

*But the group is happy. It was a good day of work! ... and it was the last day of work, the camp is nearly over.*

*While you lie there your mind wanders back to the very first day of the camp. ...*

*What did you feel when the first volunteers arrived?*

*...*

*How did the group spend the first evening together?*

*... what did you eat? What did you talk about?*

*Your thoughts are shifting to the first day of work... How did you get there? Was the group motivated? ... Did you enjoy the work?*

*....*

*Think about your free time together and of all the activities you did together... of all the fun you had ... and of all the great and stupid ideas you had*

*... what was your favorite activity?*

*.. remember the local community and your contact with them.. was it nice? or was it difficult?*

*... as you lie there your heart suddenly gets heavy while you think about the conflicts and problems you had in your camp....*

*What kind of problems did occur?*

*Have they been solved?*

*The camp is almost over, what are you doing in the remaining time?*

*What are your plans for the last evenings?*

*Do you wish the camp could go on? Are you happy that it doesn't?*

*Now, while you slowly come back to \_\_\_\_\_ (location of seminar), and leave the camp once again, remember how hard.. or easy... it was to leave the camp.*

*....*

*Take a few more deep breaths and slowly open your eyes whenever you are ready.*

### 3. written reflection "I know what I did last summer"

The first step to the written reflection is quite simple:

Material: Every PAX needs a flipchart poster and a pen.

Instruction: Write everything down that you did during your camp.

→ try to think of as many things that you did and be as specific as you can e.g. do not put "work" but "use hammer"

#### 4. Intro to competence categories

explain the 7 categories / point out that one skill (event) can match more than one category!

**1. Communication**

*mother tongue, other languages, active listening, conflict management...*

**2. Learning to learn**

*self-education, openness, adaptability, resilience...*

**3. Mathematical + technical**

*budget, handling of tools, cooking...*

**4. Leadership**

*motivation, taking responsibility, decision making...*

**5. Relationship**

*empathy, teamwork, helpfulness...*

**6. Management**

*time, organisation, logistics...*

**7. Cultural Awareness**

*openness, tolerance, respecting diversity, interest...*

Talk with PAX about the different categories, give examples and communicate that the categories are not fixed but merely a basic distinction of some “key points”.

#### 5. connection “events to competence”

PAX return to their written recollection (flipcharts) and determine which event matches which category.

Therefore, they write the according number(s) next to the event.

As this is an individual reflection about their learning process it is definitely possible to have many categories for just one event.

Keep in mind that an event like “use a hammer” can, in some cases not only be in Cat3 but in any other Cats as well. The individual experience is key! While PAX 1 only used the hammer once to bang in a nail (Cat3), for Pax 2 the hammer was a tool used daily. Therefore, PAX 2 might have more associations with “use hammer” than PAX 1 and thus connects the event to Cat3, 1, 5 and 6 (e.g.).

Encourage PAX to dig deep into their memories.

At the end, PAX shall make a list of how often they “used” the categories.

## 6. Round-up session

Give your PAX enough time to finish. Once everyone is satisfied with their results, come together in a circle.

- Was it easy to remember your camp?
- Was it easy to remember specifics of what you did?
- According to their list, which competence did they develop the most?
  - Were you surprised by your results?
- How do you feel now?

*Best outcome: PAX realised how many different things they actually did and feel empowered by their personal achievements. They realize that the role of Campleader offers tons of different opportunities to develop new skills and broaden their competencies on many different levels.*

## National Reflection Sessions: Methodology Outline

*Session Outline for International Reflection Meeting in Germany, October 2020*

*Authors: Ondřej Bárta and Veronika Marková*

### Aims

- 1) Igniting and supporting reflection of the workcamp leaders in national groups, i.e. in their mother tongues on the workcamp proceedings
- 2) Data collection for the research focusing on the proceedings of the workcamps

Individual reflection is to be covered by session on Written Reflections (prepared by Zijad and Selina)

### Timing

Full morning or afternoon session, i.e. 3.5 hours, 220 minutes + one 20-minute-long break

**TOTAL TIME: 4 hours, 240 minutes**

### Basic Instructions

#### *Before Coming to the October Meeting*

- Infopack to include this information:
  - o All participants are asked to bring one picture of their workcamp, ideally one which can be talked about and gives a glimpse into the whole workcamp experience

#### *At the October Meeting*

- All participants are asked to have on them the picture of the workcamp they were asked to bring
- All participants are divided into national groups
- National groups are divided into reflection groups of equal sizes and no larger than 10 participants per group
  - o If two leaders from the same workcamp are present, they are separated into different reflection groups
- Reflection groups are matched with trainers in line with their nationalities (e.g. Czech participants with a Czech trainer)
- Reflection groups are supervised by trainers and led to separate rooms/spaces and follow the session outline below on a simultaneous basis
- It is foreseen that 6 reflection groups are to be expected to run simultaneously (2 per each country)
- Therefore, 6 trainers need to come together beforehand and make sure all have the same understanding of the session outline

## Session Outline to Be Used in Each Reflection Group

### Room Preparation

- 1) Prepare a canvas map of your respective country
  - a. A simple drawing on a large flipchart will suffice, no prints or excellent masterpieces needed
    - i. See what the border looks like and create a resembling shape!
    - ii. Are there any important points, e.g., a capital, important lake everyone knows, etc.? Mark them on the canvas!
    - iii. Leave the rest empty for the participants to fill in!
  - b. Make sure the drawing is large enough for the participants to be able to attach the pictures of their workcamps (see above) and at the same time also draw a bit
  - c. In case of doubts, go for bigger rather than smaller, e.g., 4 flipcharts joined together make for a nice canvas 😊
- 2) Make sure markers of different colours are available (at least 10 – one per session participant)
- 3) Make sure a glue is available for the participants to stick their pictures to the map
- 4) Make sure the canvas map is in the middle of the room with enough space for the 10 session participants to gather around, ideally having a chance to build themselves a comfortable seating (this is a long session!) and with a chance to see each other at all times
- 5) Make sure water/coffee/cookies/fruits are available in the room for the participants to grab when they feel tired and need an energy boost
- 6) Make sure a recording device (a phone with a recording app, etc.) is placed at one corner of the map canvas, battery well charged, recording app ready to roll, enough storage space to ensure safe recording of the whole session
- 7) Create a flipchart visualizing the workcamp cycle (preparatory phase, implementation of the workcamps, reflection phase) and all involved stakeholders (local partner, the coordinator [e.g., INEX in the Czech Republic], the international volunteers, the local community, the co-camp leader)
- 8) Keep this visualisation out of sight of the participants, it will be used in the second half of the session

### Session Proceedings

- 1) Session is held in national language of the participants (e.g., in Czech for Czech participants)
- 2) Reflection group participants are informed that this session is part of the research and will be recorded
- 3) Reflection group participants are asked to find a comfortable place around the map canvas
- 4) Reflection group participants are asked to place the photo of their workcamp they brought with them on the map canvas in such a way so that it represents a geographical location of the workcamp (to the best of their knowledge, fun aspect to be supported by the trainer in order to get participants into a comfortable and talkative mood)
- 5) Reflection group participants are asked to take a marker and draw three pictures/signs/ideas which characterize their workcamp and help others understand the photo and the workcamp as best as possible

This should not take more than 20 minutes.

- 6) When this is done, reflection group participants are asked to introduce their workcamps to others, using the photo and the drawings

This should not take more than 70 minutes, giving a total of 90 minutes including the first activity.

Break of 20 minutes is to be made, leaving 130 minutes for the rest of the National Reflection Session.

- 7) After the break, make sure the recording device is moved to the flipchart you have prepared, and is ready to continue recording.
- 8) When participants come back, present the flipchart you have prepared (and kept out of sight) visualizing and reminding the participants of proceedings before/during/after the workcamp as well as of all the main stakeholders involved

This should not take more than 10 minutes, leaving you 120 minutes for the rest of this session.

- 9) Give the participants the following task:
- a. Please take post-its and write down one post it of 2-5 words in which you identify a moment in each of these phases which is important for you when you think back
  - b. Again, the aim is to have ONE post-it for EACH of these phases, containing 2-5 words maximum
    - i. Training
    - ii. Preparation of the workcamp
    - iii. Workcamp itself
    - iv. Concluding/wrapping up, reflecting after the workcamp
  - c. Start with the first phase and invite participants to come to the flipchart, pin on it their post-its, and explain shortly the importance of the moment they have written down, to the others.

This should not take more than 60 minutes, leaving you another 60 minutes for the rest of this session.

- 10) When discussions are over, another task is given:
- a. Please take post-its and write down one post-it of 2-5 words in which you identify an experience with each of these stakeholders which is important for you when you think back
  - b. Again, the aim is to have ONE post-it for EACH of these stakeholders, containing 2-5 words maximum
    - i. local partner
    - ii. coordinator (e.g., INEX in the Czech Republic)
    - iii. group of international volunteers
    - iv. local community
    - v. your fellow camp leader, if you had one
  - c. Start with the first stakeholder and invite participants to come to the flipchart, pin on it their post-its, and explain shortly the importance of the experience they have written down, to the others.

- 11) When the discussions are over, thank the participants, save the recordings, send them to lunch/dinner.