

Volunteering at IFOAM EU

Guide for ESC* Applicants at IFOAM EU
(International Federation of Organic
Agriculture Movements - EU Group)

2019-2020

*European Solidarity Corps



*An IFOAM EU volunteer enjoying the Belgian countryside during her two-week stay at an organic farm.
Credits: TM*

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1 Project description

"I can describe my experience in three words - friends, contacts and lifestyle change. Well four words in total :) - every person I met during my stay in Brussels taught me a bit more about myself. I met people who've become my friends, I met people with whom I established a great contact and I met people who changed my lifestyle forever. It was all about relationship and new knowledge. I wish you the best volunteering and life experience! And remember that only you yourself can change the way you look at things."

– Zane Zake, former volunteer at IFOAM EU

1.1 What is ESC?

The European Solidarity Corps (ESC) provides young people residing in Europe with the unique chance to express their personal commitment through a full-time voluntary activities in a foreign country for a period of up to 1 year. Young volunteers can develop new skills and, therefore, improve their personal, educational and professional development. More information about ESC is available below:

- General information about ESC: https://europa.eu/youth/solidarity_en

1.2 About IFOAM EU

The International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM EU Group) is a **non-profit organisation** that represents more than 190 member organisations from all EU-28 EFTA and candidate countries (in total 33 different countries). **We fight for the adoption of ecologically, socially and economically sound farming systems in Europe and the world.** IFOAM EU itself is embedded in the IFOAM Organics International movement with 800 affiliates in more than 100 countries.

We believe that only holistic farming models based on the four main principles of organic agriculture – **health, ecology, fairness and care** - can cope with existing threats like climate change or soil and water pollution and will lead to more resilient and sustainable farming systems.

With our diverse network of more than 190 members throughout Europe our work spans the **entire organic food chain** and beyond: from farmers and processors, retailers, certifiers, consultants, traders and researchers to environmental and consumer advocacy groups. The IFOAM EU Group with its head office in Brussels is unique in being **the only body with representation from all of Europe** to facilitate transnational efforts within organic agriculture. Additionally, we built up strategic alliances with numerous diverse environmental and social NGOs in Brussels and all over Europe to share best practice examples and increase knowledge around sustainable food and agriculture.

Our aim is to encourage and disseminate knowledge, principles and practices about organic agriculture that can bridge language and cultural barriers, to IFOAM EU affiliates, to public authorities and to society. The work of IFOAM EU in Brussels is mainly focused on building the capacity and representing the interests of its members in the EU policy making process and making sure that organic farming is considered as a sustainable food production system as it can provide healthy food and at the same time be a solution for environmental and societal challenges due to climate change mitigation and adaptation. In short, IFOAM EU is striving to make Europe greener and more resilient and sustainable – more organic!

More information can be found in the [IFOAM EU leaflet](#) or [website](#).

1.3 Who can participate in the ESC project at IFOAM EU?

To take part in the ESC you must be between the ages of **18 and 30** and be **legally residing in an EU country** and be able to live and work in Belgium. Relevant experience is not needed but applicants should have a substantial interest in learning about organic agriculture. IFOAM EU welcomes volunteers from all backgrounds regardless of gender, cultural, ethnic background or religion. We open our doors to open-minded and strongly motivated young individuals. As our organisation is an umbrella organisation, we enjoy welcoming volunteers from diverse cultures as it helps to enrich our community and understand the challenges and opportunities for organic on a wider scale.

1.4 What to expect from volunteering at IFOAM EU

The ESC experience at IFOAM EU offers a wide array of opportunities such as learning more about EU institutions, IFOAM EU's advocacy work, the activities and mission of other like-minded NGOs, organic farming practices and the impact of environmental and climate policies, but also about Belgian/Brussels culture. This learning will be enabled through:

- **Trainings on content and practical skills** provided by IFOAM EU staff on various topics such as GMOs, the organic regulation, project development and management, communication, writing, climate change, organic seeds etc;
- **On arrival and midterm trainings provided by the National Agency** (see section 3 for more information) where all other volunteers doing their ESC placement in Belgium can meet and are introduced in more detail to the ESC programme while spending several days together outside of Brussels;
- **Farm stays on organic farms in Belgium**, as each volunteer has the possibility to visit up to 2 organic farms in Belgium for 1 or 2 weeks;
- **Public events in Brussels** such as conferences at the European Parliament or the Commission, workshops, festivals, IFOAM EU events and meetings, seminars and many other events constantly happening in this vibrant city;
- **Meetings and exchanges with other young people** from like-minded Brussels NGOs through the YEP Brussels (Young Environmental Professionals of Brussels) network, which was founded by previous volunteers of IFOAM EU and now has over 200 members that regularly interact, organise seminars of pertinent topics in their premises and work on common projects (such as the organisation and facilitation of a workshop on access to land for young farmers that was organised by former volunteers for the 2018 European Youth Event in Strasbourg);
- **Supporting the daily work of IFOAM EU**, allowing the volunteers to develop professional experience by helping with tasks within their teams (more information on specific tasks is further described in section 2);
- **Supervision and mentoring**, provided for each volunteer, as each one has a supervisor that guides the volunteers through their individual projects and supports them in their tasks, and a mentor that serves as guidance in personal development and helps the volunteer to get integrated within the organisation, the project and community;
- **Becoming a part of the IFOAM EU team**, enabling volunteers to learn from their peers and staff and to join common activities such as multiple day long excursions to organic farms and by taking part in office celebrations.

The learning will be monitored and evaluated with the help of their mentors and will result in the **YouthPass** that each volunteer will receive upon completion of their placement at IFOAM EU (more information about the YouthPass: <https://www.youthpass.eu/en/>)

ESC volunteers at IFOAM EU are expected to commit **35 hours per week** (7 hours a day) from **Monday to Friday**, to the ESC project. **Most of this time will be spent at the IFOAM EU office** with other volunteers and staff, unless there are some meetings or conferences to attend. The weekend is free. Volunteers are also entitled to two days of holidays per month (**24 days of holidays in total** for the 12 month duration, plus one week off during Christmas and days off during Belgian public holidays when all other IFOAM EU staff also have days off).

1.5 Financial and linguistic support

All essential costs related to your volunteering placement are covered. You will be provided with accommodation, insurance, a local public transportation pass, reimbursement of your travel to and from Brussels, and on top of that financial support of 515 EUR per month for food and other living expenses. Furthermore, you will receive access to the Erasmus+ Online Linguistic support to help with learning languages such as French or Dutch.

1.6 Travel and accommodation

Travel costs associated with coming to Brussels from the country of origin and then returning after the project end are covered. While you are in Brussels, you will receive a public transportation pass to give you access to all busses, trams and the metro in the city.

The accommodation for all volunteers is arranged by IFOAM EU. Each volunteer will have their own room in a shared house (with other volunteers and/or other young people) with a shared kitchen and bathroom, located about 20-30 minutes walk from the IFOAM EU office.

1.7 Insurance

All volunteers will receive insurance coverage during the entire length of their ESC placement.

2 Description of ESC Placements within IFOAM EU teams

“Volunteering at IFOAM EU is an excellent opportunity to gain more in-depth understanding of the organic sector and the impact of EU legislation. Working in the communication team has taught me the importance and power of the messages we share to make Europe more organic. Besides the knowledge I gained, the vibrant city of Brussels is full of inspiring and interesting people who enriched and refined my experience even more.”

– Triin Viilvere, former volunteer at IFOAM EU

There are five ESC placements available within five different teams within IFOAM EU for the five volunteers. Each volunteer will be assigned to just one team for the duration of their stay, however there is the possibility to be involved in some tasks from other teams if agreed with supervisors, in order to allow volunteers to learn about a wider range of IFOAM EU's work. During the application stage, you are asked to rank the teams in order of preference. Your preference will then be taken into account and you will have a chance to discuss the tasks of different team during the interview stage, if selected.

Below is the description of each team and examples of tasks that the volunteers might be involved in. Please keep in mind that this is only an indication and that tasks and areas of focus will be discussed during the interview stage and defined even further with supervisors.

2.1 Research and Innovation team

The Research & Innovation team works mainly on identifying research and innovation needs of the organic sector and relaying them to policymakers. To this end, it is running the secretariat of TP Organics (the European Technology Platform for organic food and farming www.tporganics.com). The Team is also coordinating our partner in several EU research projects such as LIVESEED, OK-Net EcoFeed, RELACS, and Internet of Food and Farm 2020. The ESC volunteer in the research and innovation team would be primarily involved in supporting the secretariat of TP Organics, which would include some of the following tasks:

- Managing the communication with the members and the Steering Committee of TP Organics;
- Maintaining the TP Organics website, and preparing and sending out the newsletter to members and stakeholders;
- Supporting the organisation of the annual public event Organic Innovation Days and managing the Call for Innovations in organic food and farming that is associated with the event;
- Supporting advocacy work on EU Research & Innovation Policy (organisation of lobby meetings, participation in conferences and workshops...).

In addition support may be needed for dissemination of the LIVESEED project:

- Updating [LIVESEED website](#);
- Managing stakeholder database of LIVESEED.

2.2 Communication team

The communications unit is a cross-cutting, working on many of the topics IFOAM EU advocates for. It is responsible for IFOAM EU's external communication, including traditional channels, such as our website, newsletters, and printed publications, as well new media, such as social media, infographics, and videos. The successful ESC candidate will be involved in the following tasks:

- Updating and maintaining IFOAM EU website: creating webpages, adding information, files, events etc. (training will be provided);
- Production of the IFOAM EU newsletter: planning, collecting articles, liaising with designers;
- Social media support: monitoring, updating, drafting content and scheduling;
- Basic design: creating simple infographics and images for IFOAM EU's online presence;
- Providing secretarial support: to IFOAM EU's expert group of organic communicators, projects, reporting and various (online) publications;
- Database and intranet support: Assisting with tasks related to sending mailing from our database and keeping it up to date (runs on CiviCRM, training will be provided) and maintaining and developing the intranet (SharePoint, Wiki).

2.3 Projects and fundraising team

The IFOAM EU project and fundraising team primarily works on building relationships with private foundations on various topics such as organic seeds, climate change, sustainable food production and consumption, and it develops project proposals to both private donors and the EU (mainly DG Environment, DG Research, DG Education and Culture). The team manages the IFOAM EU capacity building program for Central Eastern European countries and supports colleagues from Policy and Research & Innovation units in implementation of projects funded both by private donors and the EU. The volunteer that would be part of the projects and fundraising team would mainly be:

- Participating in the implementation of IFOAM EU fundraising strategy (background research on potential funders, identification of potential funders to support IFOAM EU policy work and liaising with them);
- Contributing to developing and writing project proposals to potential donors – European Commission and private foundations (developing concepts, budgets, and write specific parts of project proposals);
- Assisting in project management (organisational, administrative and project support tasks such as planning, following milestones and deliverables, organisation of meetings and events, facilitation of the exchange of information between project partners, editing project reports).

2.4 Events and membership team

The ESC volunteer chosen for this position will work within two key areas: 1/events and 2/membership. The events team is dealing with the organisation of IFOAM EU events (such as the Organic Processing Conference or the European Organic Congress), while the membership team is responsible for membership coordination and internal communication (with IFOAM EU members and internal structures such as the Council and the Board). Within events, the volunteer would support the general organisation and coordination of IFOAM EU events, including:

- Assisting with logistics of events (researching and setting up bookings of venues, hotels and travel for speakers and participants);
- Implementing events communication activities (including website and mailings management);
- Developing and setting up the programme of events (including drafting agendas, speaker invitations and speakers guidelines).

Within membership, the volunteer would be mainly:

- Assisting in the communication towards IFOAM EU Members and governing structures (such as the council and the board);
- Updating information about IFOAM EU Members and governing structures on the website and internal databases;
- Assisting in the preparation of events and meetings involving IFOAM EU Members and governing structures.

2.5 Policy

The policy team is working on many different policy topics related to organic farming such as the CAP, Rural development programmes, GMOs, seeds, agriculture and climate change. The work includes advocacy meetings, working with the different IFOAM EU interest groups, the development of position papers and the work on different EU projects. The ESC volunteer would be involved in the following:

Advocating for developments within agricultural and environmental legislation, specifically:

- Researching, identifying and analyzing relevant legislative developments in the environmental and agriculture policy fields;
- Assisting the Policy manager in coordinating internal structures such as the IFOAM EU Interest Groups, Expert groups and Task Forces.

Coordinating and implementing IFOAM EU Projects, specifically:

- Following and monitoring the on-going EU legislative processes related to GMO-free organic agriculture, food and feed;
- Assisting in organizing project workshops and roundtables with external experts to advocate for EU national and regional policy frameworks;
- Producing minutes and reports with the projects results after meetings, workshops, etc. to communicate project outcomes to the project funders.

Networking with policy makers, external partners and IFOAM EU members, specifically:

- Representing IFOAM EU at external events as requested;
- Organising, preparing for, attending, taking minutes and follow up on meetings/phone conferences, external events and others as requested;
- Supporting internal coordination of meetings and maintaining the CDG mailbox.

3 Project partners

The following partners are involved in the implementation of the ESC project and have the following roles:

Partner name	Role	Short Description
1 IFOAM EU	Hosting organisation	The International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM EU Group) is a non-profit organisation that represents more than 190 member organisations from all EU28 EFTA and candidate countries (in total 33 different countries). We fight for the adoption of ecologically, socially and economically sound farming systems in Europe and the world. For further info see point 2.1 (above).
2 JINT	National Agency (organises on-arrival and midterm trainings and coordinates other ESC projects)	JINT is the Flemish knowledge centre for international youth mobility and international youth policy and the National Agency for the Youth in Action Programme of the European Commission. JINT supports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - young people to experience international exchanges - youth workers to get inspired by international cooperation - policy makers to have an international look at youth, youth work and youth policy <p>Approximately 6000 young people, youth workers and policy makers, participate in JINT activities each year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1800 young people between 15 and 25 participate in international exchange projects - Over 25% of these young people come from groups with fewer opportunities. - 3000 young people contact JINT for information about international exchanges or cooperation - 600 youth workers participate in international training initiatives in Flanders or abroad. - 300 young people and youth workers join youth policy debates and information sessions