



## Volunteer Policy

This policy applies to anyone who undertakes any type of work at our discretion and on our behalf, at all levels and within all functions of our organisation doing so of their own free will and without payment. This policy does not apply to participants on the EIL Volunteer Abroad Programme.

Approved and adopted by the Board of EIL Intercultural Learning on  
October 15<sup>th</sup> 2011

Reviewed: 13<sup>th</sup> October 2017  
Next review due: October 2020

## Policy overview

We at EIL believe that everyone has the right to be an active citizen and that volunteering has an extremely valuable role to play in our society. We invite volunteers throughout the island of Ireland and beyond to join us on our journey. We welcome anyone who supports our mission and abides by our ethos to contribute in a meaningful way to our work.

We recognise that every volunteer is different and has a unique contribution to make. We strive to make available many different volunteering opportunities at all levels and within all functions of our organisation. We understand fully that some of our volunteers may only be able to give small amounts of time. For those who wish to get more engaged and remain involved for longer, we intend to make sure that there is ample scope for learning, progression and social connection.

We know that when volunteers and paid staff work together, the results can be so much stronger than when they work alone or apart. However, we also acknowledge that working as a volunteer-staff team can be challenging. We aim to support both volunteers and staff members to work well together.

We will ensure that we plan effectively for volunteer involvement. We aspire to implement good systems for the recruitment, selection, training, supervision and support of our volunteers and deal swiftly with any problems that may arise. We will monitor our progress and regularly evaluate what we have achieved to see where we can make improvements.

Getting all of this right will take time. We do not claim to be there yet, but we will do all that we can, within our resource constraints, to make volunteering with EIL as positive an experience as possible.

## Detailed policy and procedures

### **1 Scope**

#### 1.1 Purpose of this document

We know that volunteering is at its most effective when the needs of our organisation are most closely meshed with the needs of our volunteers. The purpose of this policy, which has been developed collaboratively, is to provide clear direction to current and potential staff and volunteers about how we manage volunteer engagement within EIL. Everyone is expected to adhere to this policy in full.

#### 1.2 Who is a volunteer?

We define an EIL volunteer as anyone who undertakes any type of work at our discretion and on our behalf, doing so of their own free will and without payment. This includes the Board of Directors, unpaid interns and those on unpaid placements.

#### 1.3 Who is not a volunteer?

We could not run many of our programmes without our host families. However, they are not considered as volunteers, as they receive an allowance for the work that they do. By their very nature, our paid staff members are not volunteers, regardless of whether or not they give time to the organisation on an out-of-hours basis. Similarly, the work undertaken by volunteers should never be considered as employment, with all the legal rights and responsibilities that that entails.

#### 1.4 Pro bono publico

EIL warmly welcomes pro bono public work. Anyone providing professional supports on an entirely fee-free basis is classed as an EIL volunteer. However, those offering reduced rate services are dealt with in the same manner as all other EIL contractors.

### **2 Roles and responsibilities**

#### 2.1 Board of Directors

The Board governs the organisation. Its members are volunteers who have significant strategic and legal responsibilities. Members of the Board are expected to commit to, and abide, by an agreed code of conduct. Their role as Board members takes primacy over any other roles they may take on within the organisation. The Board has a duty of care to anyone who is involved with the organisation, and this includes the safety, health and well-being of volunteers. The Board commits to setting a positive

tone for volunteer involvement, to being open to hearing the on-the-ground experiences of both volunteers and paid staff, and to take action as appropriate. Specifically, it will ensure that volunteering within EIL is adequately resourced and that this policy is reviewed whenever necessary.

## 2.2 The Management Team

The management team executes strategy and policy and oversees operations. This includes making sure that this policy is implemented so that volunteers are effectively integrated throughout our organisation. All senior managers will, wherever possible, work directly with volunteers themselves. The Chief Executive Officer will work especially closely with Board members. The CEO and Management Team is responsible for leading on the implementation of the EIL volunteer strategy and volunteer policy, together with the Special Projects Coordinator. This includes ensuring that there is a central coordinating point for volunteer involvement that will support both volunteers and paid staff to work jointly towards progressing EIL's goals.

## 2.3 Other employees

All operational staff members are also expected to work willingly with and alongside volunteers. Whilst certain aspects of the systems for volunteering will be coordinated centrally, knowledge of – and responsibility for – effective volunteering will not just reside with one person and will instead be spread amongst all staff members. Volunteers will not be used to displace employees from their paid positions.

## 2.4 Other volunteers

We regard volunteers as a valuable EIL resource. Our volunteers therefore have the right to be: given meaningful and responsible assignments; provided with training; have access to information/tools/materials to perform their roles well; treated equally; supervised and supported effectively; and recognised appropriately for their work. They are allowed to progress, say 'no', and make mistakes (provided that they learn from these). In return, we expect volunteers to: be law abiding; commit to the values, goals and policies of our organisation; undertake work to a high standard; be honest; be reliable, especially in terms of attendance and punctuality; maintain confidentiality as necessary; and behave professionally and respectfully at all times.

### **3 Volunteering opportunities**

#### **3.1 Role descriptions**

We will develop a standard role description template to be completed for each volunteering position that we offer, both ad hoc and regular. This will describe the scope and boundaries of the role and will include, at a minimum: a position title (never simply ‘volunteer’); who the volunteer reports to/is supervised by; what the time commitment is; what the work site is; what the work itself consists of; what skills or experience are required (if any); and what the volunteer can get out of doing the work. We may provide additional information if relevant.

#### **3.2 Range of roles**

We recognise that volunteers have different skills and interests (and that these may change over time), so we aim to provide a broad and flexible range of opportunities to get involved. We will seek to have in place opportunities that: are short-term and longer-term; require minimal time commitment and place greater demands on time; have varying levels of responsibility; involve working at EIL headquarters and elsewhere; etc. Our present volunteering roles include: Director on the Board; member of the Global Education Committee; EIL Explore Mentor; plus a number of ad hoc roles. We intend to grow this range of opportunities considerably and welcome ideas from anyone – paid staff, volunteers, and others – for new volunteering roles at all levels within EIL. We also invite potential volunteers to contact the organisation with their specific skills and interests and if appropriate, we will draw up a tailored volunteering role that incorporates these attributes.

### **4. Recruitment and selection**

#### **4.1 Eligibility to volunteer**

We welcome anyone who shares our vision and adheres to our ways of working to consider volunteering with us. We will never automatically exclude anyone. If a volunteer is suitably motivated and qualified to perform work on behalf of the organisation, s/he will be able to apply for any volunteer vacancies with EIL. Volunteers who are younger than 18 will require the written consent of a parent or guardian. For people in receipt of social protection, it is their own responsibility to check if their payments will be affected by a decision to start volunteering.

## 4.2 Approach to recruitment

We will recruit actively to fill any volunteering positions that we have, using whatever methods are most appropriate for the individual vacancies. We will seek to involve as volunteers those who already have a connection with EIL as well as new people. However, we will concentrate our efforts on the former, at least in the first instance. We do, however, ask that active, long-established volunteers think twice about taking on multiple roles, so that newer volunteers can also get involved in our work.

## 4.3 Approach to screening and selection

In order to match the right individual to the right EIL volunteering opportunity, a two-way matching process will be used. Our primary way of doing this is through a basic, standard application form and informal chats at which potential volunteers can honestly express what they hope to contribute, what they wish to gain from volunteering with EIL, what their true time availability is, and any other information that influences their ability to undertake the voluntary work. Where necessary, we will use other screening techniques. For example, we may ask to verify qualifications/certificates held by the potential volunteers if the position requires this or ask them to undergo the Garda Vetting process if they are likely to have unsupervised access to children or vulnerable people. Those who are considering joining the Board of Directors will have to go through an election process at the organisation's annual general meeting.

## 4.4 Offer and acceptance

We intend to match potential volunteers with opportunities with minimal delay. We will confirm what has been agreed in writing (usually by email). We reserve the right not to accept someone as a volunteer. We also reserve the right to prevent volunteers taking on certain roles if doing so would constitute a conflict of interest. We further reserve the right to reassign volunteers to a different role that better matches their skills, if their initial role does not work out.

# 5. Induction and ongoing training

## 5.1 The need for induction and ongoing training

All volunteers, however highly skilled and/or experienced, will require and receive an induction, both to the organisation and to the volunteer role. Part of this orientation will involve reading and signing a copy of this policy. It will also involve guidance on how to work effectively with paid members of staff and with other volunteers. Depending on the role, further skills development may be required in due course, which could consist of reading, shadowing, mentoring, training courses, etc. The Special

Projects Coordinator will perform these inductions until such time as the organisation appoints a Volunteer Coordinator.

## 5.2 Prioritising access to training

EIL strives to make personal and professional development opportunities available to its volunteers. Budget constraints mean that it is not possible for every volunteer to avail of every training opportunity that presents itself. EIL will prioritise training for skills that are legally required (for example, governance training for Board members or health/safety training for volunteers that may need this to perform their particular roles), followed by other skills that are required by specific roles. EIL will ensure that other training opportunities are publicised amongst all recently and currently active volunteers. Where demand for places exceeds supply, a range of factors will be taken into consideration, including whether or not the volunteer has previously benefited from training. Where feasible, EIL will also seek to provide free or low-cost development opportunities for its volunteers (for example, peer training combined with social events). All volunteers will be given certificates for any substantial training undertaken as part of their role with EIL.

## 5.3 The volunteer's responsibilities with regard to training

If EIL has stipulated that attendance at training is an essential part of the volunteering role, it is expected that the volunteer will comply with this. It is not acceptable for a volunteer to agree to undertake a course or similar and subsequently not attend, without notifying EIL in advance and/or without an acceptable excuse. If there are any costs associated with non-attendance at the event, EIL reserves the right to ask the volunteer to reimburse these costs. Regardless of the nature of the training, volunteers are expected to provide EIL with an account of the skills learnt (for example, by: providing staff with a copy of the materials; writing a blog post for the EIL website; making a presentation at an EIL event, etc). We will provide guidance as necessary.

## **6. Support**

### **6.1 Support in context**

We aim to make volunteering with EIL as enjoyable and fulfilling as possible and to remove any barriers that might prevent someone from starting or continuing to volunteer with us. In addition to an accessible recruitment process, fair selection procedures and appropriate training opportunities, we offer a number of other vital supports to all of our volunteers.

### **6.2 Insurance**

We ensure that all agreed volunteering activities are covered by our insurance policy. Volunteers are not entitled to use the EIL car. They may transport themselves and their own personal property to EIL premises and EIL events under their own motor insurance cover. However, they may not use their own car for carrying passengers and goods in an official EIL capacity, except by prior arrangement and always with EIL indemnified in their motor insurance policy.

### **6.3 Expenses**

EIL is a not-for-profit organisation that is strongly cost conscious. We reimburse reasonable and previously agreed out-of-pocket expenses incurred as a direct result of volunteering with EIL. Time is not an expense, but travel to and from the volunteering site, travel undertaken whilst volunteering, subsistence, and other out-of-pocket expenses are. As a general rule, we expect both staff and volunteers to use economic forms of getting around (walking, cycling, standard public transport, etc), although we accept that this may not always be practical, advisable, or the most efficient use of a volunteer's time, in which case taxis or similar may need to be used. An EIL expenses claim form must be submitted together with all supporting receipts by the end of the month in which the expenditure was incurred.

### **6.4 Social opportunities**

We understand that many people volunteer for its social aspect and we try to maximise the opportunities for social interaction. Any volunteers working in the EIL office are invited to partake in Wednesday morning coffee breaks. A culture of sociability is encouraged as an integral part of all other EIL meetings/events (especially before and after the main business). Furthermore, we encourage, and will from time to time organise, purely social events for our volunteers, sometimes in conjunction with the paid staff team. We will also explore possibilities for additional online and offline interaction between volunteers.



## 6.5 Recognition

We value equally all voluntary effort undertaken on our behalf. We know that it is crucial that our volunteers are recognised for their contribution. Our main way of doing this is through the regular and heartfelt saying of ‘thank you’ for voluntary work completed. From time to time, we may use more formalised ways of recognising the contribution made by our volunteers. Additionally, we will focus celebrations on achievements made by volunteer-staff teams.

## 6.6 Other means of support

We strive to create a climate in which our volunteers can feel motivated. We aim to have in place ongoing two-way communication channels, including effective systems to supervise the work undertaken by our volunteers. We will try to provide opportunities to grow and take on additional responsibilities for those who desire this and we understand that this requires regular discussions about individuals’ wants and needs. We will do everything we can to avoid tokenism and aim to involve volunteers as equal partners in our decision-making processes.

# 7. Representing EIL

## 7.1 Volunteers as EIL ambassadors

Volunteers are asked to actively and positively promote EIL whenever possible. Before officially representing EIL in any capacity, volunteers must seek organisational permission. When publicly representing EIL, volunteers must ensure that their behaviour and personal appearance/attire are appropriate for the task at hand. When performing such a role, it is essential that EIL vision, values, strategy and policy are portrayed. If volunteers are unsure about specific details, it is important to be open about this and to seek further information from an appropriate source. EIL is an inclusive organisation that is not affiliated to any religious denomination or to any political party. Whilst we accept that individual volunteers may hold specific religious or political views, EIL should never be used as a platform for these views. Furthermore, if volunteers are charged with an arrestable offence, regardless of whether or not this pertains to their volunteering role, they must notify the Chief Executive Officer within 48 hours.

## 7.2 Traditional media

No volunteer may speak about EIL to members of the media without the prior agreement of the Chairperson of the Board of Directors, the Chief Executive Officer or the Special Projects Coordinator.

## 7.3 Social media

Volunteers are encouraged to contribute blogs and vlogs to our award-winning website and engage with us on our social media channels (Facebook, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Twitter and YouTube). They are also urged to promote EIL on social media more widely, always bearing in mind their responsibilities as EIL ambassadors.

# 8. Recordkeeping and confidentiality

## 8.1 Essential records

We strive to limit bureaucracy, but acknowledge that the effective functioning of our volunteering system requires that we maintain certain records. We keep a copy of our volunteers' contact details (including contact details of their next of kin) and ask that they let us know of any changes to these details. We will also work towards having an online system that records what the volunteer has previously done on EIL's behalf, what s/he is currently involved in, what her/his limits on availability are, etc.

## 8.2 Confidentiality

We respect volunteers' privacy and will comply at all times with data protection legislation. While working with EIL, volunteers may have access to personal or commercially sensitive information and/or information that is the intellectual property of EIL (or of EIL partners with whom the organisation has had to sign a confidentiality agreement). Caution must be exercised to maintain the privacy of this information, none of which may be disclosed to third parties during or after volunteering with EIL. Any such materials must be returned to EIL on departure.

## **9. Supporting paid staff to work effectively with volunteers**

### **9.1 Staff recruitment**

We will ensure that the job descriptions for all of our staff members make reference to working with volunteers on an equal, but complementary, basis. When recruiting for new positions, we will seek – at a minimum, experience of having volunteered – and having experience of managing volunteers will be a desirable attribute for most roles.

### **9.2 Staff development**

The induction process for new members of staff will include an introduction to EIL's key volunteers and an explanation of how our volunteer policy is put into practice. Training will be provided for all staff on working effectively with volunteers. EIL may also support those on the current staff who have no volunteer experience to gain that experience. Staff that work especially well with volunteers will be recognised for this in appraisal processes.

## **10. Dealing with problems**

### **10.1 Complaints by volunteers**

We want our volunteers to be happy at EIL. If they are unsatisfied for whatever reason, they are urged in the first instance to deal proactively and constructively with the arising issue themselves. If they are unable to resolve it, they must inform the person/committee to whom they are accountable (as outlined in their role description), who is/are charged with addressing the problem. If the problem in fact relates to this individual/committee or if no satisfactory solution has been found within a reasonable period of time, the matter may be escalated to the next level(s) within the organisation.

### **10.2 Complaints about volunteers**

We recognise that people may raise concerns about our volunteers. For example, other volunteers, staff members or the general public may question a volunteer's reliability, their ability to complete work to an adequate standard, or the appropriateness of their behaviour. If the complaint is one of gross misconduct or something similar that requires an immediate and senior response, the Chief Executive Officer and/or Chairperson of the Board of Directors are responsible for deciding the next steps. For all other matters, complaints should be directed in the first instance to the person/committee to whom the volunteer is accountable (as outlined in the volunteer's role description), who is/are charged with addressing the problem. If this individual/committee is unable to resolve the situation within a reasonable period of time, the matter may be escalated to the next level(s) within the

organisation. Interventions will vary according to the nature of the complaint and may include informal discussions with the volunteer, the reallocation of roles, written agreements about expected standards of behaviour or performance, and even ending the relationship between the volunteer and the organisation. EIL reserves the right to dismiss volunteers if they are impacting negatively on the organisation, whether intentionally or not, for example, by bringing the organisation into disrepute, mistreating fellow workers, failing to abide by organisational policies, taking up a disproportionate amount of management time, etc.

### 10.3 Managing the departure of volunteers

We value long service, but do not expect anyone to stay with EIL forever. Volunteers may resign at any time, although we prefer to receive advance notice of departure. We would really like to know why volunteers decide to leave and if/how they think the volunteering experience could have been improved. If appropriate, we will arrange an informal 'exit interview' to seek answers to these questions; alternatively, we welcome written feedback. We will keep in touch with our former volunteers and our door is always left wide open for their potential return (with the exception of volunteers who were officially dismissed by EIL).

## 11. Evaluation

### 11.1 Evaluating how we manage volunteering

We aim to constantly improve our practice around volunteering. We will communicate on an ongoing basis with both our volunteers and our paid staff team about the relative success of our volunteering system and how we can build on the positive aspects and overcome the negative ones. We will also consider the feasibility of using self-evaluation.

### 11.2 Evaluating the policy

We will undertake an initial evaluation of this policy after one year. Thereafter, the policy will be reviewed in full on a three-yearly basis, although essential minor changes may be made prior to this time to reflect changed circumstances.