



# VOLUNTEER POLICY

| VERSION CONTROL |                     |             |
|-----------------|---------------------|-------------|
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|-------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| <b>Introduction.....</b>                                    | <b>2</b>     |
| <b>Purpose of this Policy.....</b>                          | <b>2</b>     |
| <b>Scope of this Policy.....</b>                            | <b>2</b>     |
| <b>Definition of a Volunteer.....</b>                       | <b>2</b>     |
| <b>Volunteers and Members.....</b>                          | <b>3</b>     |
| <b>Responsibility for Volunteering.....</b>                 | <b>3</b>     |
| <b>Recruitment and Selection of Volunteers.....</b>         | <b>3</b>     |
| <b>Confidentiality and Data Protection.....</b>             | <b>4</b>     |
| <b>Training and Development.....</b>                        | <b>5</b>     |
| <b>Support and Supervision.....</b>                         | <b>5</b>     |
| <b>External Representation.....</b>                         | <b>6</b>     |
| <b>Complaints and Departure.....</b>                        | <b>7</b>     |
| <b>Evaluation of Volunteering at EIL/AFS Ireland.....</b>   | <b>8</b>     |
| <br><b>Appendix 1 - Code of Conduct for Volunteers.....</b> | <br><b>9</b> |

## **Introduction**

As a charity, people are the most important asset that EIL/AFS Ireland has. Volunteers play a particularly important role in the work of the organisation. We therefore recognise that it is crucial that we attract volunteers to our organisation to help us achieve our charitable purpose and associated goals.

We provide appropriate support and supervision to allow volunteers to realise their full potential in their role with EIL/AFS Ireland. We appreciate and value the significant contributions that volunteers make to the aims and objectives of EIL/AFS Ireland. We are committed to compliance with all relevant legislative obligations relating to the environment in which our volunteers carry out their role.

## **Purpose of this Policy**

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance on all aspects of volunteering at EIL/AFS Ireland. It does not constitute a binding contract. It supplements other organisational policies and procedures, as well as our strategy and constitution.

## **Scope of this Policy**

This policy applies to anyone who undertakes any type of work at the discretion of or on the behalf of EIL/AFS Ireland, 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 EIL/AFS Ireland programmes which involve volunteering abroad with other host organisations.

## **Definition of a Volunteer**

We define an EIL/AFS Ireland 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.

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

We could not run many of our programmes without our network of Irish host families. However, they are not considered volunteers, as they receive an allowance towards food, fuel and utilities. Our staff are not considered 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.

Volunteers are entitled to reimbursement for costs incurred while carrying out their volunteering activity with EIL/AFS Ireland. This can cover things such as travel, accommodation or food expenses, and does not count as payment.

## **Volunteers and Members**

Members of EIL/AFS Ireland, as outlined in the organisation's Constitution, also cannot receive remuneration. However, all EIL/AFS Ireland volunteers are not automatically considered members, they must go through an application process if they wish to become a member. Being a member of the organisation gives you the right to vote and run in elections for the Board, and review and approve items at Annual General Meetings, but otherwise has no effect on your ability to participate in EIL/AFS Ireland activities as a volunteer.

## **Responsibility for Volunteering**

### **1. Communications and Volunteer Manager**

The Communications and Volunteer Manager is responsible for ensuring that this Volunteer Policy is implemented efficiently and effectively. All other staff and volunteers will facilitate this process.

### **2. Senior Management Team**

The Senior Management Team (SMT) executes strategy and policy and oversees operations. This includes supporting the Communications and Volunteer Manager in implementing this policy so that volunteers are effectively integrated throughout our organisation. All senior managers will, wherever possible, work directly with volunteers themselves, and the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) will work especially closely with Board members.

### **3. Employees**

All staff members are expected to work willingly with volunteers. Whilst certain aspects of the systems for volunteering will be coordinated centrally by the Communications and Volunteer Manager, knowledge of – and responsibility for – effective volunteering will be spread amongst all staff members. Volunteers will not be used to displace employees from their paid positions.

### **4. Board of Directors**

The Board of EIL/AFS Ireland is responsible for reviewing and approving the Volunteer Policy from time to time, to ensure it aligns with our strategy and other organisational policies and procedures. As the body responsible for the strategic leadership of the organisation, the Board will ensure that volunteering remains a core part of EIL/AFS Ireland's activities.

## **Recruitment and Selection of Volunteers**

### **1. Eligibility**

At EIL/AFS Ireland, we provide a volunteer recruitment process which is free from any unlawful discrimination, in accordance with our Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Policy.

We welcome anyone who shares our vision, mission and values, and adheres to our ways of working to consider volunteering with us. Prospective volunteers must demonstrate a commitment to the aims of EIL/AFS Ireland and their availability as volunteers must align with the needs of the organisation.

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.

For some volunteer roles (e.g. Board member), specific selection criteria will apply to determine the suitability of a volunteer candidate to a particular role. In addition, selection criteria may become relevant where there are more applicants for a particular volunteer role than positions available. Selection criteria are based on the relevant skills, qualifications and experience of volunteer candidates.

## **2. Procedure**

Depending on the role to be filled, our recruitment and selection process may include some or all the following stages:

- Preparing a Volunteer Role Description.
- Preparing and placing a volunteer recruitment advertisement.
- Agreeing selection criteria.
- Meeting volunteer candidates, collectively or individually, to discuss the nature and expectations of the volunteer role.
- Shortlisting applicants against agreed selection criteria.
- Notifying interview candidates and unsuccessful applicants.
- Interviewing of candidate volunteers by a suitably briefed interview panel.
- Assessing candidates against agreed selection criteria.
- Offering a volunteer role to the successful candidate(s).
- Notifying unsuccessful candidates.
- Verifying relevant educational qualifications or experience of successful candidate(s).
- Checking employment or other references with referees nominated by a successful volunteer candidate.
- Issuing a volunteer agreement for the volunteer's signature.
- Completion of Garda vetting (where applicable).
- Facilitating an election process at the AGM, in the case of a volunteer running for a Board position.
- Providing interview feedback to unsuccessful candidates who request it.

Reference checks and any verification of educational qualifications or experience which involves contact with third parties will only take place once EIL/AFS Ireland forms a clear view that it would like to recruit a candidate volunteer. EIL/AFS Ireland will always request the permission of the candidate volunteer in advance of checking references or qualifications. Reference checks for every candidate volunteer are carried out in the same way. It is the policy of EIL/AFS Ireland to seek two references, preferably from separate sources e.g. academic, employment, volunteering etc.

A trial period may be set in respect of volunteer roles to ensure both the volunteer and EIL/AFS Ireland are satisfied with the volunteering arrangement. The duration of the trial period is dependent on the nature and hours of the volunteer role.

## **Confidentiality and Data Protection**

EIL/AFS Ireland respects the right to privacy and confidentiality of our volunteers and prospective volunteers.

EIL/AFS Ireland may from time to time in the course of administering its business, exercising its legal rights and performing its legal obligations in connection with the recruitment of volunteers, need to process both personal data and special categories of personal data (including, for example, information relating to health). EIL/AFS Ireland will process such data in accordance with the applicable data protection legislation including the General Data Protection Regulation and implementing legislation. Further details in relation to what personal data is collected in relation to volunteers or prospective volunteers, and the purposes for which such data may be used are set out in EIL/AFS Ireland's Document Retention Policy, (which may be amended or updated from time to time).

## **Training and Development**

Before a volunteer commences their role, they will go through an induction process. As part of their induction, the volunteer may be provided with a detailed Volunteer Role Description. The Volunteer Role Description specifies the responsibilities and tasks involved in the volunteer's role, EIL/AFS Ireland's expectation as to the way these responsibilities and tasks will be carried out and any other relevant information applicable to the role. The volunteer will have an opportunity to voice any queries they may have about their role. In addition, the volunteer will be provided with information about:

- The vision, mission and values of the organisation.
- The organisational structure of EIL/AFS Ireland.
- How their role fits within the broader purpose of the organisation.
- The supports available to volunteers, including key contacts, information about the volunteer's supervisor/line manager and communication channels within EIL/AFS Ireland.
- The type of commitment expected of volunteers.
- The space, equipment, and facilities necessary for the volunteer to carry out their role.
- Health and safety, including any applicable risk assessments in respect of the volunteer's role.
- EIL/AFS Ireland Code of Conduct for Volunteers (see [Appendix 1](#))
- Details of the grievance and disciplinary procedures.
- All other relevant policies and procedures of EIL/AFS Ireland.

An appropriate level of training is offered to all volunteers to enable them to fulfil their role as effectively as possible.

## **Support and Supervision**

### **1. Contact Points**

Volunteers will have multiple points of contact which they can turn to for support at any time, throughout the duration of their volunteering activity with EIL/AFS Ireland. The primary point of contact for support from the staff team is the Communications and Volunteer Manager, but volunteers may receive specific support directly from other staff members where relevant, depending on the type of project they are working on. Volunteers can also seek support from other volunteers in the network, and may be assigned a mentor who can provide specific support when they start a new role.

## **2. Insurance**

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

## **3. Expenses**

EIL/AFS Ireland 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/AFS Ireland. Time is not counted as 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/AFS Ireland Expenses Claim Form must be submitted together with all supporting receipts by the end of the month in which the expenditure was incurred. The most up-to-date version of the Expenses Claim Form can be requested at any time from the Communications and Volunteer Manager.

## **4. Social Opportunities**

We understand that many people volunteer for its social aspect and we try to maximise the opportunities for social interaction when volunteering with EIL/AFS Ireland. Any volunteers working in the EIL/AFS Ireland office are invited to partake in Wednesday morning coffee breaks with the staff team. A culture of sociability is encouraged as an integral part of all other EIL/AFS Ireland 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 regularly explore possibilities for additional online and offline interaction between volunteers.

## **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.

## **External Representation**

### **1. Volunteers as EIL/AFS Ireland Ambassadors**

Volunteers are asked to actively and positively promote EIL/AFS Ireland whenever possible. Before officially representing EIL/AFS Ireland in any capacity, volunteers must seek organisational permission. When publicly representing EIL/AFS Ireland, 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 the EIL/AFS Ireland mission, vision, values, strategy and policy are promoted. 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/AFS Ireland 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/AFS Ireland should never be used as a platform to promote these views. Furthermore, if volunteers are charged with a criminal offence, regardless of whether or not this pertains to their volunteering role, they must notify the CEO within 48 hours.

## **2. Engagement with Media**

We love when volunteers share their EIL/AFS Ireland experiences and help spread the word! We encourage volunteers to submit blogs or vlogs for our website and engage with our social media channels (Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, etc.).

When posting online about EIL/AFS Ireland, please remember that you represent our community, so keep things positive, respectful, and in line with our values.

If you're ever approached by members of the media or asked to speak publicly on behalf of EIL/AFS Ireland, please contact the CEO or the Communications and Volunteer Manager first for approval.

## **Complaints and Departure**

### **1. Volunteer Complaints**

We want every volunteer to enjoy their time with EIL/AFS Ireland. If something isn't right, try to address it directly and constructively first. The most effective way to resolve most conflicts or concerns is to speak with the relevant volunteer or staff member directly, so that any issue can be fixed quickly at the source. If that doesn't work, please contact the Communication and Volunteer Manager. If the issue still isn't resolved, a formal complaint can be submitted according to EIL/AFS Ireland's Complaints Policy.

### **2. Complaints about Volunteers**

Sometimes others may raise issues about a volunteer's behaviour or performance. Serious matters (like gross misconduct) will be handled by the CEO or Chairperson of the Board of Directors. Other concerns should go first to the Communications and Volunteer Manager. Actions might include an informal conversation with the volunteer in question, a change of role, or, in rare cases, ending the volunteering arrangement.

### **3. Leaving EIL/AFS Ireland**

Volunteers are free to step back from their role whenever they wish, though advance notice is appreciated. We welcome feedback through an informal chat or short note, as it helps us to improve. We value our volunteers' time and hope to stay in touch, except in cases where a volunteer was formally dismissed.

In the event of a volunteer being formally dismissed, the volunteer in question will receive notice immediately from the organisation.

## **Evaluation of Volunteering at EIL/AFS Ireland**

### **1. Evaluation of Procedures**

We aim to constantly improve our practices and procedures around volunteering at EIL/AFS Ireland. We will communicate on an ongoing basis with both our volunteers and our paid staff team about the relative success of our volunteering activities and how we can build on the positive aspects and review the negative ones. We will also regularly investigate opportunities and methods for conducting both internal and external evaluation and review of volunteering activities.

### **2. Evaluation of the Volunteer Policy**

The EIL/AFS Ireland Volunteer Policy will be reviewed and approved by the Board one year after it is first adopted. Thereafter, the Board will review and approve the policy in full every three years, although essential minor changes may be made at any time as necessary.

## **Appendix 1 - Code of Conduct for Volunteers**

### **Purpose**

The purpose of the Code of Conduct for Volunteers is to set out standards of behaviour expected from volunteers of EIL/AFS Ireland. All volunteers should ensure that they have read and comply with this Code of Conduct.

### **Standards of Behaviour**

Volunteers should maintain the highest standards of behaviour in the performance of their duties by:

- Fulfilling their role as outlined in their written Volunteer Role Description to a satisfactory standard;
- Performing their volunteer role to the best of their ability in a safe, efficient and competent way;
- Following the organisation's policies and procedures as well as any instructions or directions reasonably given to them;
- Acting honestly, responsibly and with integrity;
- Treating others with fairness, equality, dignity and respect;
- Raising concerns about possible wrongdoing witnessed by the volunteer in the course of their work with EIL/AFS Ireland with the Communications and Volunteer Manager.
- Meeting time and task commitments and providing sufficient notice when they will not be available so that alternative arrangements can be made;
- Acting in a way that is in line with the mission, vision and values of the organisation and that enhances the work of the organisation;
- Communicating respectfully and honestly at all times;
- Observing safety procedures, including any obligations concerning the safety, health and welfare of other people in line with training provided to volunteers;
- Reporting any health and safety concerns;
- Directing any questions regarding EIL/AFS Ireland's policies, procedures, support or supervision to the volunteer's supervisor;
- Addressing any issues or difficulties about any aspect of their role or how they are managed in line with EIL/AFS Ireland's grievance procedures;
- Declaring any interests that may conflict with their role or the work of the organisation (e.g. business interests or employment). If any doubt arises as to what constitutes a conflict of interest, volunteers may seek guidance from the Communications and Volunteer Manager.
- Keeping confidential matters confidential;
- Exercising caution and care with any documents, material or devices containing confidential information, and at the end of their involvement with EIL/AFS Ireland returning any such documents, material or devices in their possession;
- Seeking authorisation before communicating externally on behalf of EIL/AFS Ireland;
- Maintaining an appropriate standard of dress and personal hygiene;
- Disclosing the fact that they have been charged with/or convicted of a criminal offence by prosecuting authorities (or given the benefit of the Probation of Offenders Act 1907 as amended) to the Communications and Volunteer Manager. For the avoidance of doubt, volunteers are not required to disclose the fact or details of 'spent convictions' under the Criminal Justice (Spent Convictions and Certain Disclosures) Act 2016 (as amended) to EIL/AFS Ireland.

Volunteers are expected NOT to:

- Bring EIL/AFS Ireland into disrepute (including through the use of email, social media and other internet sites, engaging with media etc.);
- Seek or accept any gifts, rewards, benefits or hospitality in the course of their role;
- Engage in any activity that may cause physical or mental harm or distress to another person (such as verbal abuse, physical abuse, assault, bullying, or discrimination or harassment on the grounds of gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race or membership of the Traveller community);
- Be affected by alcohol, drugs, or medication which will affect their abilities to carry out their duties and responsibilities while volunteering;
- Provide a false or misleading statement, declaration, document, record or claim in respect of EIL/AFS Ireland, its volunteers, employees or Board members;
- Engage in any activity that may damage property;
- Take unauthorised possession of property that does not belong to them;
- Engage in illegal activity while carrying out their role;
- Improperly disclose, during or after their involvement with EIL/AFS Ireland ends, confidential information gained in the course of their role with the charity.

Where a volunteer is found to be in breach of the standards outlined in this Code of Conduct or any of EIL/AFS Ireland's other policies and procedures, this may result in the volunteer's position being terminated. Notwithstanding the foregoing, volunteers should note that EIL/AFS Ireland may terminate a volunteer's position without cause, at any time.

Volunteers must acknowledge that no employment relationship is created in the context of their role with EIL/AFS Ireland. The board of Directors will review the Code of Conduct for Volunteers at 3-year intervals or as appropriate. The Communications and Volunteer Manager is responsible for ensuring that this Code of Conduct is implemented effectively. All other staff and volunteers, including charity trustees, are expected to facilitate this process.

## Signature

As a Volunteer with EIL/AFS Ireland, I agree to adhere to the standards of behaviour outlined in this Code of Conduct:

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Name (printed): \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_