



# **Concordia International Volunteers**

# **Teenager Handbook**

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## **1. Introduction**

Concordia first started in 1943 during the Second World War when young people were encouraged to support the war effort by gathering fruit and crops in the fields. After the war young people from Europe were invited to take part in a scheme in order to rebuild international friendships and to promote peace.

Concordia now exchanges volunteers with over 60 partners worldwide and between them over 1800 short term volunteering projects run each year.

Four full time staff and several volunteers run the International side of Concordia.

## **2. What is a Teenage Project?**

Teenage Projects are specially designed projects for young people aged 16 – 17 years old. They are only available on Concordia's 'Standard Programme' which is mainly within Europe.

The main countries that run Teenage Projects are: France, Italy, Germany, Finland, Estonia, Lithuania, and Turkey.

All Teenage Projects have extra supervision and in France the camp director has to have a diploma recognised by the Ministry of Youth and Sport. This is compulsory on every French teenage project and this director is legally and personally responsible for the project and if they cannot be their then the project will close. Whist in Estonia all leaders have to pass special training by the Ministry of Education and take an exam which is then valid for 5 years. With the French and Estonian organisations leading the way in terms of experience with teenagers, all the projects ensure that there is a high level of supervision and will act within the law of their own country regarding minors. Due to the level of care being increased when working with young people aged 16 – 17 much thought has gone into the organisation of the work and logistics of the projects. The following are guidelines set out by our Alliance network regarding volunteering with teenagers:

1. The leaders of the projects will be legally responsible for the teenagers on their specific projects and if the teenagers need to leave during the project then they will have to have signed authorisation by the teenager's parent or guardian.
2. The volunteering work will be less technical than an adult project and they will work less hours (a guideline is to work for around 5 hours a day to the normal 7 hours a day)
3. There is normally up to 3 - 4 camp leaders for a group of teenagers. The group is normally made up between 12 – 20 volunteers
4. In France all teenage projects are visited by an officer from the Ministry of Youth and Sport who will check official papers, hygiene and the

- organisation of that project. Although other countries might not have such stringent laws around working with Teenagers' they will however ensure that there projects are run to a high standard.
5. Volunteers are not allowed to leave the project by themselves, and they are always under the supervision of a co-ordinator.
  6. On some projects they might also be volunteers who are 18+ as well as younger volunteers, under 15 but this should be stated within the project description.

### **3. What do you need to think about before booking on to a Teenage Project?**

- How will the potential volunteer get to the country that they want to volunteer in? What are the transport links and as parents/guardians are you happy for your son/daughter to travel to that particular country possibly unaccompanied?
- Do the dates of the projects fit into your holiday time?
- Volunteers will be expected to stay for the duration of the camp.
- Volunteers will be with a group of other international people from all over the world. They might be the only British person on the project.
- Does Concordia and their partner need to know any extra information about your son/daughter such as medical/food requirements
- If you are going away on holiday at the same time as your son/daughter is on a volunteering project have you given Concordia details of how you can be contacted?

### **4. What information is needed from the volunteer before booking a Teenage Project with Concordia?**

Concordia will need a signed copy of their terms and conditions from the volunteer's parents or guardians.

Potential volunteers will need to fill out the VEF (Volunteer Exchange Form) either on-line or by printing a copy off the website.

The volunteer might be asked to fill in a motivation letter. This is normally one side of A4 paper telling the hosting organisation about why they want to come on the project, what they might gain and what they can give. This information is used by the hosting organisation to assess how the teenage might fit in to the project and it also gives them some further information about that person.

Teenage volunteers might also be asked to bring to the project a signed declaration by the parent/guardian on their health.

## **5. Choosing a Teenage Project**

All our projects are available on our website – [www.concordiavolunteers.org.uk/projects/](http://www.concordiavolunteers.org.uk/projects/). By selecting the volunteer's age a list of all the projects for Teenagers will come up. Each project has a written description and the dates when it runs. The volunteer can choose up to 8 projects, with the most preferred choice first, followed by their second and so on. If they would like to go on 2 projects, one after another then please make sure that they have enough time to travel between each project and remember that they will be tired from the first project so may need to take some time off in between projects. All the information about booking projects is available on the website.

Once the volunteer has chosen some projects, they can submit their form either through our on-line payments service, where projects can be paid for by credit and debit cards, or by post where we accept both cheques and postal orders.

Once we receive the completed applications it can take between 3 – 5 working days to process the application. Concordia, once they have an application contacts our partners overseas, usually by email to ask if they have any places on the chosen project. If they do have a spare place then we book the teenager on to this project and they let the volunteer know. If there is no place on the first choice we then contact the second choice partner etc.

Once it has been confirmed by Concordia that they have secured a place on the chosen project then you are free to book travel and insurance for the volunteer, PLEASE DO NOT DO THIS UNTIL CONCORDIA CONFIRMS THE PLACE.

Usually one month before the project starts the volunteer will receive information sheets. One of Concordia's staff will also attempt to speak by phone to all teenage applicants.

## **6. What are the Info Sheets?**

The info sheets are the most important information that the volunteer will receive. In the info sheet are all the details about the project. It is essential that both the parents and the teenage volunteer read all the info sheets. Below is a list of items that will be found on the info sheets:

- Code and project name
- Project dates – start and departure dates

- Who the host partner is and who the local host who will be running the project is
- What type of project it is
- Description of the work
- How many volunteers will be on the project
- Accommodation description with the address
- All contact details of the partner, host and leader including emergency contact details
- What to bring
- What things could be done in the free time
- Information about the local area
- Information about the leader – often the leader/co-ordinator's will contact the volunteer before the project to introduce themselves.
- Language spoken – the official language of the project, it is normally English unless otherwise stated
- Meeting point for the volunteer to be picked up, this is normally very comprehensive with travel information and phone numbers if connections are missed
- Maps of where the pick up points, work or accommodation is located
- Travel instructions
- Insurance
- Extra fees

## **7. What to bring**

This will be on the info sheets but normally the volunteer will be expected to bring a sleeping bag and a roll mat as often they might be sleeping on a floor – this will be made clear in the info sheets.

All medication that the teenager might need and if it is prescription medication please make sure that the host knows before the project starts.

It is always great for the teenager volunteer to bring something from home to share with the other volunteers such as postcards of their home town, photos of their family, local sweets or small gifts.

## **8. Types of volunteering work**

Volunteers will always volunteer within a community and can take part in many different types of work including:

- Arts and crafts
- Environmental
- Working with children
- Teaching & education
- Festivals

## **9. Accommodation**

The types of accommodation can vary depending on the project but a volunteer can expect to stay in a variety of places, from sleeping in a tent to staying in a youth hostel. The type of accommodation will be always made clear on the info sheets. The volunteers will normally share accommodation usually with the same sex but again this should be stated on the info sheets. The host will have organised the accommodation and will have been expected to check that the volunteers have access to cooking facilities, unless they are catered for and to check that the accommodation health and safety is in line with the country's laws. All volunteers will be given an orientation of their accommodation on arrival. The address of the accommodation will be on the info sheets.

## **10. In country transport**

On some projects the volunteers' accommodation might not be very close to the work site and when this happens the host will be expected to provide transport to the work site. The host of the project is responsible to ensure that the volunteers are transported in safe transportation and that they follow the rules of the country regarding transportation. **VOLUNTEERS SHOULD NEVER DRIVE THE VEHICLE THAT TRANSPORTS THE VOLUNTEERS TO THE WORK SITE EVEN IF THEY HAVE A VALID DRIVERS LICENSE.**

## **11. Orientation on project**

All volunteers will be given instruction on how to do their volunteering work. It is the host's responsibility to ensure that the volunteers have adequate instruction on how undertake their volunteering work. Volunteers should always be encouraged to ask questions if they are not sure about the work they are doing or if they feel they do not understand the instructions.

## **12. Meeting points**

The meeting points for arrival and departure will be clearly stated on the info sheets. It is the volunteer's responsibility to ensure that they are at the meeting point at the correct time and date. If the volunteer can not make the time of the meeting point they must call the appropriate number on the info sheets to inform the leader/co-ordinator of their late arrival.

This is a great opportunity for the Teenage Volunteer to gain some experience of travelling independently.

## **13. What are the volunteers responsibilities**

- To make sure that they have read and understood the info sheets and Concordia's terms and conditions
- To be motivated to volunteer on the project
- To arrival at the correct time and date at the stated meeting point
- To book their own travel
- To book insurance
- To interact within the group
- To have a fun time
- To be responsible for their own actions
- To follow project rules
- To follow in-country rules

## **14. Keeping in contact**

It is a good idea for the volunteer to contact home once they have arrived. The camp leaders/co-ordinator will encourage them to do this. If you do need to contact the volunteer during the project please call the leader/co-ordinator's phone number that is on the info sheets. If you do have any questions during the project please do contact Concordia and we will do everything we can to answer your questions. We work office hours – Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm – 01273 422218

## **15. What to do if there is a problem**

- **From the volunteer**

Volunteers will be encouraged to talk with the camp leader if they have a problem. Often they will get a bit home sick at some point of the project. This is normal and the leaders/co-ordinator will help the volunteers to be involved within the group and keep them busy during their volunteering. If the volunteer feels that their problem is not getting solved by the leader/co-ordinator's then they can

Speak to the partner organisations who will try to assist. If this doesn't work then please contact Concordia who will try to help.

If you do have a complaint please see our complaints procedures on our website for more information

The projects do have rules which the volunteers are expected to follow and these will be clearly stated at the beginning of the project. Please note that volunteers will be asked to leave a project if they commit a crime in-country or show violent behaviour.

- **From the parent**

Please keep a copy of the information sheets as they will have the contact details of the partner, leader/co-ordinator's and their emergency details. If you cannot get in touch please let Concordia know and they will do their best to contact them for you too.

Please remember to give your correct contact details

If you do need to take your son/daughter away from the camp because of an emergency please let both the partner organisation and Concordia know so that they can make arrangements with you.

In the unlikely event that your son/daughter is asked to leave the project you will be asked to sign a form from the partner organisation before they will be allowed to leave.

**Alcohol and smoking:** The volunteers will have to follow the country rules regarding both alcohol and smoking. Normally there will be no drinking allowed during the project and if smoking is allowed it will be in a designate area and the volunteers must follow the countries rules regarding this. Each project will have 'Camp Rules' the volunteers will be asked to follow these and if they do break them especially regarding alcohol, violent behaviour and anything which is seen as a crime then the volunteer will be sent home.

## **16. Extra fees**

Some Teenage Projects do charge an extra fee this is due to the cost of teenage projects being far higher than running an adult project. The insurance is higher and the project leaders are often paid, qualified staff. The extra fee will be on the project description so you will know in advance of booking how much this will be. Often the volunteer will be asked to take this extra money out with them to pay the host but sometimes you can pay this in advance to the host.

## **17. Our Networks**

Concordia is part of two international networks:

- ❖ The Alliance of European Voluntary Services - [www.alliance-network.org](http://www.alliance-network.org)
- ❖ CCIVS - [www.unesco.org/ccivs](http://www.unesco.org/ccivs)

All the partners that we work with are members of either or both networks. Within these networks we work to standards and there are strict joining criteria for organisations to be able to become members. Although Concordia acts as a third party and is not responsible for the running of our partners projects both networks are very supportive and Concordia regularly meets with the partner organisations to discuss their volunteer projects.

## **18. Feedback**

All volunteers are asked to fill in a project evaluation once they have finished their projects. This is essential information for Concordia as we can then evaluate the project and feed this information back to our partners whom we meet with twice a year. Both positive and negative feedback is essential to ensure that we can improve the projects each year.

## **19. Summary**

Although there is a lot to think about please do remember that this is a fantastic opportunity for a young volunteer to gain some independence, learn new skills, make new friends and most importantly have a fun time. On the whole we get amazing feedback from our volunteers and our partners have many years experience of working with teenagers to ensure that they have a fun, fulfilling cultural and safe experience.

If you do have any questions the staff at Concordia would be more than happy to answer your questions.