



The Story of a Peaceful Movement



International Workcamp in Stuttgart in 2014 (ijgd)

Contents

From 1920 until 1945	S. 3
From 1945 until 1968	S. 4
From 1968 until 1990	S. 7
From 1990 until 2020	S. 10
Statements on the occasion of Workcamp's 100th anniversary in the year 2020	S. 14
Imprint	S. 21
Who can you sign up with?	S. 22

From 1920 until 1945



First SCI-Workcamp close to Verdun in 1920 – Pierre Cérésolle (left)

In the autumn of 1920, together with a group of like-minded individuals, Swiss pacifist Pierre Cérésolle organised the first ever workcamp. Its purpose was to assist in the rebuilding of Esnes, a village near Verdun that had been destroyed during the First World War. Volunteers from France, Germany, Great Britain and Switzerland all pitched in – a

commitment which was not entirely welcomed, largely due to the German involvement.

Cérésolle did not allow this to deter him. Together with his fellow pacifists, he organised more workcamps with the primary intention of reducing the impact of natural catastrophes. From that point on, he began pursuing his dream of establishing an international peace service. Over the next few years, workcamps with international participants began taking place in various countries.



SCI-Workcamp after an avalanche in Switzerland in 1924

The formal founding of the Service Civil International (SCI), the first workcamp organisation, took place in 1931. Soon after, national branches of the organisation were quickly established in several European countries. The primary focus of workcamps for the time being was to continue providing aid after natural catastrophes. Later, however, the SCI also provided humanitarian aid to those in need, such as to refugee children during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939).



Evacuation of children in the Spanish Civil War in 1937

The Second World War rapidly interrupted the international co-operation of the respective national branches of the SCI. The German branch, first founded in 1932, had to abandon all activity as early as 1933, since several members were being persecuted and arrested for self-identifying as pacifists.

From 1945 until 1968

The German SCI branch was able to be resurrected immediately after the end of the Second World War in 1945. The British national branch played a decisive role in this. Throughout the war, the SCI national branch in Great Britain had remained as active as its remit would allow, and ultimately carried the workcamp movement back to Germany.

After the end of the war, several more workcamp organisations were established in both East and West Germany. These organisations aimed to promote peace work in order to overcome national differences. This umbrella term included youth organisations and institutions from both ecumenical Christian and apolitical secular domains, whose idea it was to take on international volunteers for their peace and reconciliation work. Even the Youth Department at UNESCO acknowledged the significance behind this type of international movement by founding the Coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service (CCIVS) in 1948. In April 1948,



Ecumenical “Build-up” camp in Berlin Weißensee in 1957



Volksbund Workcamp at the military cemetery in La Cambe in 1957

delegates from 18 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) from West and Eastern Europe, along with the USA, took part in a conference organised through CCIVS entitled “International Workcamp Organisations Conference”. In the definition of workcamps that was established here, a renewed emphasis was placed on the

prevalent notions of peace and international understanding that Cérésolle had voiced decades earlier. While the workcamps in the interwar period were still open to all ages, from 1945 onwards the movement primarily focused on younger volunteers.

In the post-war period, numerous restoration workcamps took place all over Europe. In West Germany and West Berlin alone, the number of camps rose from around 20 in 1948 to 241 in 1955, which were then being offered by 17 different workcamp organisations. Overcoming the differences brought forth by the Cold War was also an important concern of the workcamp movement. There was a predominant focus here on exchanges between East and West Germany. In West Germany, however, plans were met with resistance, as the vital support of the federal government could not be guaranteed. Despite numerous important initiatives, for a long time the exchange between East and West was limited to individual programmes and projects.

Throughout the 1950s and 60s, the workcamp movement spread more and more across the entire globe, and with it came a widened spectrum of exchange opportunities for volunteers. Workcamps usually consisted of 10 to 20 participants of various nationalities, aged between 18 and 26, working and living together from two to four weeks. It was important for the projects to be short, non-commercial, and meaningful for all involved, and include activities which would not have been financially or physically viable without the involvement of the international



German-French youth day in Verdun in 1963

group. Workcamps were not meant to replace any existing local employment positions, and the participants of the workcamp were not to be used as cheap labour for mindless work, or work that could have otherwise been done by machines.

Workcamp projects in African or Asian countries required different working conditions, however, specifically a more long-term commitment from volunteers. Parallel to the classic workcamp, some organisations began to establish long-term projects for volunteers, which sometimes lasted for more than a year.

From 1968 to 1990

The societal developments in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s also left their mark on the workcamp movement. In many workcamps, predominantly in Western Europe, the classic distribution of roles remained unchanged, in that the men would take on the physically demanding construction duties, while the women cooked, cleaned, and washed. This distribution of work was now being increasingly questioned. Ultimately, this not only led to a more equal distribution of work between male and female volunteers, but also inspired the creation of workcamps exclusively for female participants.



Pilgrimage from Poland to Sachsenhausen in 1964 (ASF archives)



Daily camp life in Munderloh in 1980 (ijgd)



Käthe Strobel, Federal Minister for Youth, visits Volksbund youth camp in 1971

Given that there had been little need for restoration projects since the 1950s, the organisations turned towards more social and political exercises and interrogations. Work-camps opened up to the possibilities of working with children, or with people from a migratory background.

A motto from an earlier decade, “Actions instead of words”, also came under scrutiny during this time. As a result, seminar programmes and discussions subsequently complemented workcamps in order to add theory to practice.

Since social learning and self-organisation were already an implicit component of every workcamp, the spectrum of themes was therefore expanded to also cover “the emancipation of gender”, “ecology and sustainability” and “intercultural learning”. Above all, discussions on the continued inequality between the Global South and the richer North were carried into the work-camps and their accompanying seminars. In the 1980s, the active engagement for peace and disarmament, the commitment to human rights, and the struggle against Apartheid were all central themes that also found their way into workcamps.

As a result of the policy of détente from both East and West Germany, it became easier to



Peace Movement in the FRG

organise workcamps across the “iron curtain” and the number of East-West exchanges and study trips increased.



CFD Workcamp (now ICJA)
in France in 1976



Volksbund Workcamp
in Slovenia in 1984

It was around this time that the “Conference of International Youth Community Services and Youth Social Services”, an amalgamation of organisations in the Federal Republic of Germany, was founded. This consortium regularly organised international workcamps as an independent form of programme. Therefore, a forum was created to represent the common interests of the workcamp partner organisations concerning politics and funding bodies, which is still active today. Within the forum, standards for exchanges are developed, and participating organisations can share best practices and offer advice to one another. Each individual organisation has its own specific profile and focus, which are to this day still being upheld. This makes it easier for young people to identify and select an appropriate partner organisation and thus strengthens their loyalty, even after the exchange period is over.

From 1990 until 2020

After the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dismantling of the fortifications at the border between both German states, the centrally led youth organisations in former Socialist countries were dissolved. Subsequently, under the influence of the “peaceful revolution” in East Germany, numerous new organisations arose, including those that initially offered similar programmes to the well-established workcamp organisations in other parts of the world.

Even workcamp organisations from the “old” Federal Republic created new branches in East Germany and throughout Eastern Europe. Suddenly, mutual exchanges were only subject to a few restrictions, such as the need for a travel visa in certain countries. Many young people leapt at the chance to discover previously unknown worlds with great joy. Global exchanges started to hold more significance, as regional networks were also being strengthened.





ijgd Workcamp playground building in Bielefeld in 2018

In 1989, the Alliance of Western European Voluntary Service Organisations, which had been established in 1982, changed its name to the Alliance of European Voluntary Service Organisations. Its working objective remained unchanged, however: promoting widened cooperation amongst workcamp organisations on both a European and non-European level.

Organisations both old and new strived to create a better understanding amongst volunteers: for each other, for their differing lifestyles and cultures, to break down existing prejudices and injustices, and to replace old concepts of ‘us versus them’ hostilities with realistic perceptions.

Over recent decades, the content of workcamp programmes in Germany has become much more diverse. Sponsor programmes for long-term voluntary services such as “weltwärts” (“out into the world”) brought on the one hand more competition, but on the other also a surge in development, since many organisations could now work with both international workcamps and the new programme activities. As a result, the workcamp partners became increasingly more professional in their administration, promotion, and pedagogical approaches.



ICJA Workcamp in Sievershausen in 2017



VJF Workcamp in Ueckermünde in 2009



ijgd Workcamp in Maasholm in 2010

Discourses surrounding the significance and content of voluntary services also deepened in the field of longer-term voluntary services, as beloved beliefs began and continue to be put to the test: “Help for the Third World” became criticism of post-colonial structures, concern for the underprivileged became inclusion and sparked discussion of various forms of discrimination.

For many years, workcamp organisations in Germany have received public funding to support the facilitation of their programmes. The most important funding body is the “Kinder und Jugendplan des Bundes” (Federal Government’s Children and Youth Plan) of the Federal Youth Ministry. This funding promotes the participation of German and non-German participants in workcamps, both in Germany and across the world. This support for international youth exchanges is exemplary in Europe



Youth Workcamp Bünde-Belarus in 2019 (aej, city of Bünde)

and forms a fundamental principle of the project-oriented international youth work amongst the typically pluralistic workcamp organisations.

The spirit of the workcamp movement lives on even today, carried by volunteers, who value their formative experiences well beyond the duration of their respective camps. Countless international friendships, relationships, and marriages have blossomed in workcamps over the last hundred years, and many former volunteers later encourage their children and grandchildren to undertake a similar experience.

The aim of the workcamp movement is as relevant now as it was 100 years ago: to promote the exchange between young people of different nationalities through collaborative work - for more peace and understanding in the world.

Statements on the occasion of Workcamp's 100th anniversary in the year 2020

Ingrid Danckaerts

President of worldwide operating

Coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service (CCIVS)

Is this the end of IVS, as we know it?

With this slogan or question CCIVS will start a reflection on the future of International Voluntary Service in the next weeks. This anniversary year and the commemoration of the first “workcamp” organised by Pierre Ceresole has inspired all of us to reflect on the values of the work we do. While Service Civil International was the pioneer organisation, over time many organisations have joined the IVS movement because they felt the “workcamp” model had such a strong impact on all those involved.

In a time when travelling becomes impossible and volunteers can't take part in workcamps abroad, we, of course, wonder what is our role as international voluntary service organisations and how we can continue our work in a different way but still promoting the same values. Maybe it had to be like this! After 100 years we need to look back at what we have achieved but we also need to look forward and see how in the new circumstances we need to change in order to give adequate responses to the challenges we see around us.

In fact even before we got to know the Corona virus several organisations were already questioning the sustainability of our model of volunteering considering the high environmental cost of having international volunteers moving around. Another critique was more related to the fairness of our model and dominance of workcamp

organisations from the Global North. According to some, the current volunteer exchange programmes reinforce the existing global power relations and don't question the global inequalities sufficiently.

These are difficult debates and there are no simple answers. We do know that the volunteer organisations are crucial in addressing these challenges and for testing alternatives that keep the IVS values at the centre of what we do. Having international volunteers working side by side with local communities is something that has proved to be very meaningful for both volunteers and community. Especially when the volunteering project is also part of a bigger framework and the connection between local and global becomes even more clear. As an overall movement we should reflect on how we take the current concerns or critiques seriously and develop our methodologies and our organisations so they can be a catalyst for societal changes.

The world in 1920 was very different from today's reality. For instance now we can see that many of our societies are much more diverse and that many of us are connected with friends all over the globe through the internet. Also many other organisations or public policies support intercultural programmes. So this forces all of us to think about the uniqueness of our model and to assess why it is worth continuing our efforts and to advocate for the support of International Voluntary Service. Listening and documenting stories of volunteers and communities that have been part of our work is essential to understand why it left such a huge impact on them.

This celebration is indeed offering us a much needed present: a moment to cherish all the good memories; to listen carefully to all the voices who have been part of IVS and to take these testimonies with us when defining the role of IVS in the new centenary ahead of us.

If one of the core ideas of the first workcamps was to build trust and understanding by living and working together we can still see a big scope for this kind of work in a

world where war, hatred and division are perhaps more present than 100 years ago. The German volunteers played a crucial role in that first workcamp in 1920 symbolising the reconciliation between 2 divided nations. Over time German workcamp organisations have been at the forefront of the IVS movement and have played an important role in supporting workcamp organisations all around the world. They proved during this pandemic that they were able to respond creatively and meaningfully to an unforeseen difficult working environment; keeping in contact with partners and setting up online projects where volunteers could continue to be engaged. The Coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service are the members and German workcamp organisations are one of the pillars of that volunteer community. We wish them all the best for the times ahead and we believe that together we can grow towards a stronger and more inclusive International Voluntary Service Movement. Together we can change the world!

Christoph Müller

Veteran of the Organisation Service Civil International (SCI)

Learning tracks in the SCI

In the mid-70s, I discovered the SCI during my studies of education and psychology in Cologne out of interest in international youth education work. After a camp leader training, I was able to organize the first work camp in the resistance against the nuclear power plant in Whyll on the Upper Rhine. We supported winegrowers and environmentalists in the Kaiserstuhl region and worked closely with opponents of the nuclear power plant in Kaiseraugst/Switzerland and Fessenheim/France.

During the protest against the NATO double decision, we set up the Lower Rhine Peace Workshop with the German Peace Society near American Pershing II missile bases. Here I was able to train pedagogical tools in teamwork, conflict resolution and project

management, which I later needed professionally. By participating in work camps in socialist countries, I gained insights into the strengths and weaknesses of real existing socialism.

Peace services in the USA with our partner Volunteers for Peace, where Bernie Saunders was also active, were also formative for me. A key developmental experience for me was the planning and organization of the first campaign Conversion – Klinomobil for SWAPO with the anti-apartheid movement and the Action Community Service for Peace. Starting in 1985, we converted and equipped three Unimog trucks as ambulances for Namibian refugees in Angola. During these solidarity actions I was able to deal with the German colonial history in Namibia, causes, forms and consequences of apartheid, as well as the interconnection of German banks and companies with this oppressive regime. From 2005 on, I worked as a youth policy advisor for the Society for International Cooperation in Zambia and was able to support the development of a Zambian work camp organization through youth work with HIV-positive young people. Personally and pedagogically, I would not want to miss my 12 active years in SCI as a learning field of intercultural skills.

Today, after 15 years of working in International Humanitarian Aid, I am involved in the training of volunteer leaders in the German Red Cross.

Robert Lange

Head of Maxim – Children and youth cultural center in Berlin

100 years of workcamps and almost 30 of them also with us at Maxim, Berlin

When we were asked in 1991 by the Association of Young Volunteers (VJF e.V.) if we would be interested in organizing an international work camp, we neither knew what it was nor what we were getting ourselves into.

We got smart and held the first work camp at Maxim in the summer of 1992. The voluntary work of the volunteers from back then has lasted until today: they helped us to create a nature and environmental garden with a pond at its centre. The garden has grown considerably over the years and the water lilies still bloom in the pond year after year ...Since then, we can look back on more than 30 such projects in which renovation, music, theatre, gardening, building, designing and concerts have taken place. The camps have always had their accommodation in Maxim as well, which means: living, working, celebrating - all in one place. What is special about this form of international youth work is the multilateral group of participants (from all over the world) and the enormous group dynamics within the three weeks, and the diversity of cultures with which the young volunteers are confronted. The exchange potential of such activities cannot be overestimated. It is impossible to list all the things that have already come out of it in Maxim. But the benefits are invaluable for the participants, the team and the German visitors to the institution during the camps. From getting to know certain specifics of other cultures, to cooking together, the numerous excursions into the city and the surrounding countryside, work, etc., one is in constant exchange about all kinds of topics. And of course there were also the classics in Maxim: friendships that lasted for many years, love affairs that resulted in children, visitors who suddenly stand in the doorway and say: "Hello, I'm ... I was a member of your workcamp in 199..." and then usually the memory slowly sets in ...

All of the international work camps in Maxim were carried out together with the VJF. Founded in 1990, before reunification, the association has become one of our most important and reliable partners over the years. Since 2000 we have also been working with ecological volunteers and since 2006 with European volunteers. We also owe these volunteers to the commitment of the VJF, and they enrich the work of our organisation in many ways. For me personally, the work camps are very important. On the one hand, because during the camps we have a completely

different institution and completely different approaches to work, and on the other hand, because of course our staff's view of Europe and the world has become more precise over the years due to the influence of the international guests. And of course, today it is still of great importance to teach the young people from all over the world the importance of togetherness, of overcoming borders and prejudices, and of cultural exchange.

Ottokar Schulz

Veteran of Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Evangelischen Jugend (aej) and long-time colleague at Trägerkonferenz der Internationalen Jugendgemeinschafts- und Jugendsozialdienste (TK)

Workcamp work has defined my résumé

It was 50 years ago to be exact. In the autumn of 1970, my church district youth leader Eleonore, who was active in the Evangelical Girl Scouts (EMP), asked me if I would like to take part in a work camp in France next summer. I knew French quite well (she didn't) and could support her a little as an interpreter. I - just in possession of the youth group leader's licence (today: JuLeiCa) after the training course in the autumn holidays - felt puffed: I had never been abroad before, participating in a work camp with the EMP seemed attractive. Okay, I hadn't heard of the French branch of the Christian Peace Service (MCP), but I had already seen material from the German branch. Somehow there had been a contact among the Girl Scouts on an international level - and now we from Göttingen were supposed to implement it in France. In Luneray in Normandy we were supposed to help build a youth meeting place for the Reformed community there. A look at the map (Michelin; 1:200,000) showed: about 10 km from the beach (English Channel); so take bicycles for excursions and bathing. I took care of the train ticket (youth group trip with bicycle

transport) and other technical details; the CMP in Paris applied for funding from the Franco-German Youth Office and Eleonore motivated us young people to come along.

After the success of this first work camp with the MCP, two more followed in the French Alps in 1972 and 1973. I had “tasted blood” - international cooperation continued to captivate me; four years later, a youth exchange between the Evangelical Youth Göttingen and the Lutheran congregation in the Polish twin town of Torun was attempted - unfortunately without success; the time for these “grassroots actions” from the local level was not yet ripe.

I had to finish my studies; doing voluntary “evangelical Youth work” had already cost me at least two semesters and the BAFöG had long since expired. So I had to take the state examination for the teaching profession at grammar schools - at that time, the chances of being hired were almost nil! So what to do? The network of the Protestant Youth was already working well at that time: “They are looking for a speaker for German-French youth exchange at the Federal Head Office - why don’t you apply? You can go into the preparatory service later,” a fellow board member from the Protestant Youth told me.

The Federal Centre of Protestant Youth (aej) took me on in 1981 – and I stayed there until I retired. With different tasks, exciting challenges, crazy projects, a circle of colleagues around the globe - finally as managing director in this federal centre where I started in 1981.

Workcamp work has defined my résumé – at least the professional part of it. I have not regretted it for a single day!

Imprint

Responsible for content:

Trägerkonferenz der Internationalen Jugendgemeinschafts-
und Jugendsozialdienste (TK) 2020

c/o BOG/VJF e.V.

Berliner Allee 59/61 • 13088 Berlin • Germany

phone: +49 (0)30 42850605 **email:** office@vjf.de **web:** www.workcamps.de

Editorial office and design:

Corinne Hocke, Oliver Wilke, representatives of TK 2020

For the pictures on these pages we thank the following organisations:

aej, ASF, IBG, ICJA, ijgd, Kiez Hölzerner See, Kolping JGD, SCI, VJF, Volksbund
Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge, ÖJD

Who can you sign up with?

Some organisations only offer individual Workcamps, while many organise camps all over the world through their international networks. You are sure to find a suitable organisation for your registration through our list of non-profit Workcamp providers.

- Aktion Sühnezeichen Friedensdienste e.V. – ASF
- Evangelisches Jugendwerk in Württemberg – EJW
- Friedenskreis Halle e.V. – FK Halle
- Internationale Begegnung in Gemeinschaftsdiensten e.V. – IBG
- Internationaler Bauorden Deutscher Zweig e.V. – IBO
- ICJA Freiwilligenaustausch weltweit e.V. – yap-cfd workcamps
- Internationale Jugendgemeinschaftsdienste Bundesverein e.V. – ijgd
- Kolpingwerk Deutschland gGmbH, Kolping Jugendgemeinschaftsdienste
- Norddeutsche Jugend im internationalen Gemeinschaftsdienst e.V. – NIG
- Nothelfergemeinschaft der Freunde e.V. – Ndf
- Ökumenische Jugenddienste – ÖJD
- Offene Häuser e.V.
- pro international e.V.
- Service Civil International Deutscher Zweig e.V. – SCI
- Vereinigung Junger Freiwilliger e.V. – VJF
- Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge e.V. – Volksbund

Sponsored by



Bundesministerium
für Familie, Senioren, Frauen
und Jugend

www.workcamps.de



1920 – 2020