

European Solidarity Corps

VOLUNTEERING AT IFOAM ORGANICS EUROPE

A GUIDE FOR CANDIDATES

2021 – 2022



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As an IFOAM Organics Europe volunteer you have an opportunity to experience a two-week stay at an organic farm.

IFOAM
ORGANICS EUROPE



**EUROPEAN
SOLIDARITY
CORPS**

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1 Project description

“Volunteering at IFOAM Organics Europe is a truly rewarding experience, both on a professional and personal level. Get to know this vibrant city of Brussels, meet inspiring people, drink beers (a lot!), learn more about organic agriculture and EU legislation and develop a wide range of skills! Knowledge and friendships are awaiting!”

Bérénice Cau, from France
Volunteer in the Projects & Fundraising Unit (2019-2020)

1.1 What is ESC?

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

More information about ESC is available in the ESC website: https://europa.eu/youth/solidarity_en

1.2 About IFOAM Organics Europe

The EU Group of the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM Organics Europe) is a **non-profit organisation** based in Brussels that represents more than 200 member organisations from all EU-27, EFTA and candidate countries (in total 34 different countries). **We fight for the adoption of ecologically, socially and economically sound farming systems in Europe and the world.** IFOAM Organics Europe itself is embedded in the IFOAM Organics International movement with 800 affiliates in more than 100 countries.

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

With our diverse network of more than 200 members throughout Europe, our work spans the **entire organic food chain** and beyond: from farmers and processors, retailers, certifiers, consultants, traders and researchers to environmental and consumer advocacy groups. The IFOAM Organics Europe Group with its head office in Brussels is unique in being **the only body with representation from all over Europe** to facilitate transnational efforts within organic agriculture. Additionally, we built up strategic alliances with numerous diverse environmental and social NGOs in Brussels and all over Europe to share best practice examples and increase knowledge around sustainable food and agriculture.

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

- More information on IFOAM Organics Europe can be found in our [website](#).

1.3 Who can join the ESC project at IFOAM Organics Europe?

Do you want to join IFOAM Organics Europe with the European Solidarity Corps?

Then you have the following characteristics:

- You are between **18 and 30**.
- You are a legal resident of a **European country other than Belgium**.
- You have the **right to live and work in Belgium**.
- You are passionate about or have a substantial interest in learning about **organic agriculture**.
- You did not participate to EVS or ESC projects before.

Relevant experience is welcome, but not needed as long as you are willing to learn. IFOAM Organics Europe welcomes volunteers from **all backgrounds** regardless of gender, cultural, ethnic background or religion. We open our doors to open-minded and strongly motivated young individuals. As our organisation is an umbrella organisation, we enjoy welcoming volunteers from **diverse cultures** as it helps to enrich our community and understand the challenges and opportunities for organic on a wider scale.

1.4 What to expect from volunteering at IFOAM Organics Europe

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

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

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

ESC volunteers will stay at IFOAM Organics Europe for 11 months, from September 2021 to July 2022, and they are expected to commit to the ESC project for **35 hours per week (7 hours a day)** from **Monday to Friday**. Most of this time will be spent at the **IFOAM Organics Europe office** with other volunteers and staff, unless there are some meetings or conferences to attend. The weekend is free. Volunteers are also entitled to **two days of holidays per month worked (22 days of holidays in total)** for the 11 months, plus one week off during **Christmas** and days off during **Belgian public holidays** when the office is closed).

1.5 Financial and linguistic support

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

1.6 Travel and accommodation

Travel costs associated with coming to Brussels from the country of origin and then returning after the project end are covered by the project (distance-based calculation realised by the European Commission). While you are in Brussels, you will receive a public transportation pass to give you access to all busses, trams and the metro in the city.

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

1.7 Insurance

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

- Volunteers are obliged to have the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC).
- ESC provides an additional insurance (Cigna) that can cover partly or fully the national insurance.

2 Description of ESC placements within IFOAM Organics Europe's teams

"I did not know much about IFOAM Organics Europe when I saw the ESC vacancy, but I shared its values of protecting biodiversity, caring for nature and fairness in the food production processes. During my volunteering I learned a lot about the organic sector and, being based in Brussels, I gained a better understanding of European Union's institutions and importance of advocacy work."

Katarina Šeme, from Slovenia
Volunteer in the Communication Team (2019-2020)

There are six ESC placements available within six different teams at IFOAM Organics Europe between September 2021 and July 2022.. Each volunteer will be assigned to one team for the duration of their stay, however there is the possibility to be involved in some tasks from other teams if agreed with supervisors, in order to allow volunteers to learn about a wider range of IFOAM Organics Europe's work. During the application stage, you are asked to rank the teams in order of preference. Your preference will then be taken into account and you will have a chance to discuss the tasks of different team during the interview stage, if selected.

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

We encourage volunteers wanting to develop their knowledge on a certain topic relevant to organic farming to contribute to our 'arguments database'. This database contains our main messages on topics related to organic and the volunteers would contribute by collecting content and visual materials supporting our external communication. This would deepen the volunteers' knowledge on a specific topic and strengthen their research skills.

2.1 HR and Office team

The Human Resources (HR) and Office team is part of the Operations team dealing with HR, Office, Finance and Legal issues. The HR team manages the staff's life cycle in the organisation from the recruitment stage and supports them throughout their personal and professional development, including their well-being, the improvement of the working conditions and of team spirit cohesion. The volunteer will collaborate with the unit (and other units) in the development of skills and knowledge of staff. They will have the opportunity to brainstorm with the team to identify solutions for an improved working environment and a greener office, as well to organise team building activities. The volunteer will develop knowledge in recruitment and HR management as well as office management skills. The main tasks of the volunteer will be:

- Support in the staff training plan: look for trainings according to the needs, and coordinate the related communication to staff;
- Coordinating the organisation of internal info-sessions given by staff on their working area, which will deepen the volunteer's knowledge of the organisation structure and topics;
- Coordinate staff meetings organisation: we have weekly, monthly, and quarterly meetings to ensure a good synergy and communication flow inside the organisation;

- Contribute to the organisation of the staff excursion, team building activities and social events to develop a sense of belonging and to contribute to a positive working environment and office culture;
- Being the person of contact for the volunteers about HR related issues (being the HR representative towards the volunteers). The volunteer will ensure a good daily management of the HR service for the other volunteers ensuring they have all the needed knowledge, information and support to fulfil their role during the volunteering;
- Assist the HR in the recruitment process: managing the “employment” functional email address, following the tests and planning the interviews;
- Support the team in the change towards the “office of the future” to make it greener and adaptive to the dynamic working environment;
- Brainstorm with the team to improve working environment and conditions in terms of HR and office but also in the general improvement of the well-being and good health of the staff;

During your ESC period, you will develop soft skills such as planning, organisation, presentation, initiative and innovative thinking but also some hard skills such as French, MS office tools (Excel, Word and PowerPoint), budgeting skills.

2.2 Research and Innovation team

The Research & Innovation team has two main areas of work: “[Research & Innovation Advocacy](#)” and “[Knowledge for Organic](#).” The advocacy activities are implemented through TP Organics, the European Technology Platform for Organic Food and Farming. TP Organics focuses on EU R&I policies: Horizon Europe and the European Innovation Partnership for agriculture (EIP-AGRI). TP Organics also provides information on funding opportunities and helps its members join research consortia.

In the area of “Knowledge for Organic”, IFOAM Organics Europe coordinates or is partner in several EU research projects such as [RELACS](#) and [BioFuitNet](#). In order to disseminate the outcomes of these projects, IFOAM Organics Europe and partners have set up the [Organic Farm Knowledge](#) platform which provides access to a wide range of tools and resources about organic farming. The ESC volunteer in the Research & Innovation team would support the secretariat of TP Organics and the development of Organic Farm Knowledge.

The ESC volunteer would engage in the following tasks:

TP Organics (50%)

- Acquire event organisation skills:
 - Contribute to the organisation of Organic Innovation Days (Nov 2021) and BIOFACH Science Day (Feb 2022)
- Acquire member management skills:
 - Communicate with members and supporters of TP Organics
 - Update contact database of TP Organics
 - Collect donations

Organic Farm Knowledge (50%)

- Acquire fundraising skills
 - Contribute to applications for foundations and agencies (concept development, writing of the applications)
- Acquire coordination skills
 - Arrange and follow-up on meetings of the Executive and Editorial Board
- Acquire promotion and dissemination skills
 - Contribute to the preparation of a communication & dissemination plan
 - Contribute to online promotion of Organic Farm Knowledge
- Acquire IT skills
 - Upload tools on Organic Farm Knowledge

2.3 Communications team

As IFOAM Organics Europe’s communications team, our work cuts across the organisation, touching on many of the topics we advocate for. We are responsible for IFOAM Organics Europe’s external communication, including traditional channels, such as our website, newsletters, mailings and printed publications, as well new media, such as social media, infographics, GIFs, videos and online publications.

If you are the volunteer who joins our team, you will have the following tasks:

- Content support:
 - Leading on the production of [IFOAM Organics Europe newsletter](#): from planning to collecting articles & liaising with colleagues and sending it out;
 - Producing content: for IFOAM Organics Europe’s website, newsletter and [initiatives that are making Europe more organic](#);
 - Elaborating on 1-2 topics from our arguments database by collecting content and visual materials (containing our main messages on topics related to organic);
 - Updating and maintaining IFOAM Organics Europe websites: adding information, and ensuring all content is up to date;
 - Supporting our social media presence: monitoring, drafting content, scheduling and reporting;
- Database and SharePoint support:
 - Responsible for sending mailings from our database (CiviCRM) and helping keep it up to date;
 - Supporting maintenance and development of our SharePoint environment (intranet, extranet and IT WIKI);
- Other tasks:
 - Managing the integrated mailing planning and the calendar with upcoming communication;
 - Tracking our media presence;
 - Assisting with basic designs: creating visual materials for IFOAM Organics Europe’s online presence;
 - Providing secretarial support: first point of contact for shared inboxes, reporting, lending your eye for detail to various (online and printed) publications/infographics, populating our digital publications.

We will provide you with a training on all tasks you will be involved in. Regardless of working at an office or at home, we have regular (digital) check-ins with the team and personal ones guiding you through the individual tasks, so you have plenty of opportunities to ask questions.

By the end of the ESC volunteering period, you will have (further) developed your communication, people and technical skills. You will have learned about (digital) editorial processes and be able to fit these into the bigger picture. Your time as ESC in our communications team will provide you with a solid basis for a wide variety of future jobs. Some of our past volunteers are now working in marketing, research or database development.

2.4 Projects & Fundraising team

The IFOAM Organics Europe’s Project & Fundraising team primarily works on getting funding and ensuring smooth execution of budgets and partnerships. It identifies funding opportunities, builds relationships with stakeholders on various topics across sustainable food production and consumption, and it develops proposals for funding to private foundations, businesses, and the EU Commission (mainly CINEA, DG Education and Culture).

The volunteer that would be part of the projects and fundraising team would mainly be:

- Supporting the implementation of IFOAM Organics Europe business development strategy (mapping, background research on potential business and institutional donors, data processing and analysis, networking with donors, implementation of donors’ engagement plans);
- Contributing to developing and writing project proposals to the European Commission, private foundations and business sponsors (developing presentations, budgets, and write specific parts of project proposals);
- Assisting in project management (managing documentation, supporting tasks such as planning, following deliverables and performance indicators, liaising with project partners, coordinating, drafting, and compiling project reports).

During the ESC period, the ESC volunteer will develop the following skills and knowledge:

- Learn how to write project proposals to public and private donors,
- Acquire working knowledge about project management tools and processes,
- Improve their skills in data compiling and processing.
- Enhance their networking, presentation, coordination, and analytical skills.

2.5 Events & Membership team

The ESC volunteer chosen for this position will work within two key areas: 1/events and 2/membership. The events team is dealing with the organisation of IFOAM Organics Europe events (such as the Organic Processing Conference or the European Organic Congress), while the membership team is responsible for membership coordination and internal communication

(with IFOAM Organics Europe members and internal structures such as the Council and the Board). Within events, the volunteer would support the general organisation and coordination of IFOAM Organics Europe events, including:

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

Within membership, the volunteer would be mainly:

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

The volunteer will also elaborating on 1-2 topics from our arguments database by collecting content and visual materials (containing our main messages on topics related to organic).

During the ESC period, the ESC volunteer will:

- Learn the processes of event coordination & backend of the physical & digital events management
- Learn how to communicate to different sector representatives, people involved in events & membership
- Learn how to work with different service providers, how to compare offers and make the best choice

2.6 Policy team

The policy team is working on many different policy topics related to organic farming such as the Common Agricultural Policy, GMOs, seeds, pesticides, food policies, biodiversity and climate change. The work may include advocacy meetings, working with the different IFOAM Organics Europe interest groups, the development of position papers, and contributing to EU research projects. The ESC volunteer would be involved in the following:

- Advocacy for developments within agricultural, food and/or environmental legislation, specifically:
 - Researching, identifying and analysing relevant legislative developments in the environmental and agricultural policy fields;
 - Coordinating the gathering of inputs from members for public consultations and position papers, and drafting IFOAM Organics Europe's position on relevant topics;
 - Assisting the policy unit in coordinating internal structures such as the IFOAM Organics Europe Interest Groups, Expert groups and Task Forces.
- Support in coordinating and implementing IFOAM Organics Europe projects, specifically:
 - Following and monitoring the EU legislative developments related to GMOs, seeds, inputs.
 - Assisting in organizing project workshops and roundtables with external experts;
 - Producing minutes and reports with the projects results after meetings, workshops, etc. to communicate project outcomes to the project funders.
- Networking with policy makers, external partners and IFOAM Organics Europe members, specifically:
 - Organising, preparing for, attending, taking minutes and follow up on meetings/phone conferences, external and internal events and others as requested;
 - Supporting internal coordination of meetings and organising the participation of IFOAM Organics Europe members to the DG AGRI CDGs (Civil-society Dialogue Group of DG AGRI) and managing the dedicated mailbox.

During the ESC period, the ESC volunteer will:

- Develop advocacy and time management skills, as well as the ability to summarize, in a clear and effective way, policy-related positions.
- Learn about organic agriculture and its positive impacts on the environment, as well as about the organic sector.
- Acquire an understanding of the functioning of EU institutions.

3 Project partners

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

Partner name	Role	Short Description
1 IFOAM Organics Europe	Hosting organisation	IFOAM Organics Europe is the European umbrella organisation for organic food and farming. We represent organic in European policymaking and advocate for a transformation of food and farming. Our work is based on the principles of organic agriculture – health, ecology, fairness and care. With more than 200 members in 34 European countries, our work spans the entire organic food chain. For further info see point 2.1 (above).
2 JINT	Belgian National Agency (organises on-arrival and midterm trainings and coordinates other ESC projects)	JINT is the Flemish knowledge centre for international youth mobility and international youth policy and the National Agency for the Youth in Action Programme of the European Commission. JINT supports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – young people to experience international exchanges – youth workers to get inspired by international cooperation – policy makers to have an international look at youth, youth work and youth policy Approximately 6000 young people, youth workers and policy makers, participate in JINT activities each year: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 1800 young people between 15 and 25 participate in international exchange projects – Over 25% of these young people come from groups with fewer opportunities. – 3000 young people contact JINT for information about international exchanges or cooperation – 600 youth workers participate in international training initiatives in Flanders or abroad. – 300 young people and youth workers join youth policy debates and information sessions

“As I came across IFOAM EU quite a few times during my studies, I was really excited about the opportunity to volunteer there. I have already gathered some experience with NGOs before, but being part of their team for a whole year, definitely reinforced my wish to continue with this kind of work afterwards. In the Policy Unit I learned a lot about different agricultural topics and EU policy, but also had the chance to further improve my project management skills greatly. Being abroad for such a long time came with some challenges, but in the end helped me to develop personally a lot and also made me meet some wonderful people from all around Europe.”

Thomas Haselberger, from Austria
Volunteer in the Policy Unit (2019-2020)