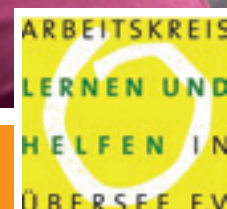


Changing ↔ Perspectives ›Incoming‹ Voluntary Services

The personal experiences of volunteers, placement organisations, coordinating organisations, and world-wide partner organisations





← different
viewpoints
↓



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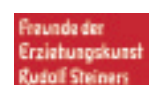
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Word of welcome

The ›incoming‹ of volunteers to Germany from other countries makes absolute sense in terms of political development and is seen as a high priority, since it gives young people from countries of the Global South the chance to spend a fixed period of time participating in the learning and orientation programme of German civil society, an offering which has been established over 50 years. The ›incomers‹ themselves, as well as their homeland societies on their return, benefit from the personal development they undergo, from their experiences engaging in a charitable-based activity and from the impressions – above all dealt with in the accompanying seminars – of living in a social and liberal constitutional state.

›Incoming‹ regularly comes out as a ›win-win‹ situation – these young people who do their voluntary placements in Germany learn a new language and get to know a society and culture which is new to them; they learn new skills which are useful to them on their return home in terms of career choices or doing their job. They gather experiences and encounter values which could make a positive contribution, in particular to supporting relevant projects in the area of political development. On the other hand, the organisations where they carry out their placements – as well as the employees who work there and the German volunteers – get a new perspective on things, gaining a greater understanding and a well-founded respect for other cultures and individuals. In this way, a significant contribution is made towards the promotion of tolerance and the combating of racism and discrimination.

A total of around 1,000 young people come to Germany every year within the framework of ›incoming‹ projects, with all the various different options for voluntary service which are available. By contrast, around 8,000 young people are sent out into the world through the various, diverse, and recognised international voluntary services, including significantly more than 3,000 volunteers who are placed via the IJFD (International Youth Volunteer Service), sponsored by the BMFSFJ (Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth). There is thus an imbalance between ›incoming‹ and ›outgoing‹. Moreover, from a political point of view, an increase in the ›incoming‹ figures is desired.

Within the framework of the still under-represented – being more expensive and time-consuming – FSJ ›incoming‹ projects from the Global South, the concept of ›FSJ INGLOS‹ now brings the chance to develop a new model, using as its basis both existing and new approaches, and allowing for the development of future and possibly broader-based projects and programmes. Moreover, further potential sponsors will be able to profit from ›incoming‹ projects. The personal conversations we have had and the impressions gained from these have convinced us of the positive impact of this project. Something is happening here which is really worthwhile – a sincere »thank you« to all those involved!



Dr. Christoph Steegmans

Head of the subdivision »Social Engagement Policy« at the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth



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living and getting involved as an international volunteer



Mutually beneficial effects

Voluntary service organisations in Germany are becoming increasingly internationally based. More and more placement organisations are seeing that working together with, and learning from and with an international (incoming) volunteer, is an essential part of their own development to become more open to other cultures and to change their perspectives. Young and even some older people from all around the world come to work as volunteers all across Germany. These individuals, who have often already gained a university degree, completed an apprenticeship or training, or gained some other qualification in their own home country, bring with them a range of different experiences and expectations when they come to Germany. So, as well as furthering their own development, they are making a useful contribution to German society. There is one thing that all those involved agree upon – volunteers, employees and clients of the placement organisations, as well as representatives of the receiving and sending organisations: during the placement period in Germany, they get to know its culture (better), as well as other cultures, they bring their language, their questions and their perspectives into the new (working and social) environment, and take away valuable experiences with them when they go.

An overall goal of these projects is the strengthening of interpersonal exchange between people from Germany and those from other countries around the world. But what is really behind it all? What are the personal experiences and impressions, and what is the impact on individuals? Which opportunities, and also obstacles, do they report back? These are the questions which will be dealt

with in this publication. We would like to present here the personal experiences of all those involved.

These experiences mirror, on the one hand, the dynamics of globalisation and international mobility. And on the other, they show how local bridges can be built between individuals, and how sustainable effects can be left behind, effects on both the employees and clients in the placement organisations as well as on the volunteers. Global networking becomes visible, tangible and can actually be experienced live in the placement organisations – and you can read all about it here!



Tore Süßenguth
Arbeitskreis »Lernen und Helfen in Übersee
(Association Learning and Helping overseas)« e.V.



→
*Playing games together
promotes exchange*

Background

Framework setting of this brochure

This publication has been produced within the framework of the project FSJ INcoming from the GLObal South¹ (INGLOS). The three-year project, which is being sponsored by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ), aims at strengthening inter-personal exchange with young people from countries from the Global South.² A further point of focus is the promotion of inter-cultural work in the placement organisations. At the same time, international partner organisations are given support in the preparation and follow-up stages, as well as in giving guidance to the volunteers to help them make good use of their newly-gained skills and competencies in their own local community in their home countries. The FSJ INGLOS project thus fulfils to a particularly high degree the diverse criteria of a transcultural volunteer project. As an international programme run on the basis of the ›Freiwilligen Sozialen Jahr‹ (Voluntary Social Year), it makes available far-reaching funding and support measures for volunteers, placement organisations, sponsors and international partner organisations, from the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ). You can find more information on the organisations involved on page 7.

›Incoming‹ volunteer service in Germany

The project FSJ INGLOS is based on the broad range of experience in society gained from taking on volunteers in other programmes. Participation of international volunteers is nowadays possible at all the state-regulated inland volunteer service organisations of the BMFSFJ – the Federal Volunteer Service (BFD), Voluntary Social Year (FSJ) and Voluntary Ecological Year (FÖJ). Since 2013, there has in addition been special funding available for volunteers with a particular need for support, and this can also be used for ›incoming‹ volunteers. In the funding programme »weltwärts« (›out into the world‹) of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), there has been a special south-north element since the end of 2013 which is based on the Federal Volunteer Service Act (BFDG). Two bilateral programmes are the German-French and the German-Israeli volunteer services. A further programme is the European Volunteer Service (EFD), financed through the EU. Moreover, for many years now, there have been further ›incoming‹ volunteers who come on a private basis, for example, through international network organisations.

The people behind the reports

18 volunteers and 16 representatives from placement organisations of the first year-group 2015/16 of the FSJ

INGLOS project present their personal impressions for us here. In addition, four representatives from the sending organisations (in the homeland countries of the volunteers) also contribute with their points of view.

For our brochure, the volunteers were interviewed five to eight months after the start of their one-year ›incoming‹ placement, involving both written questions and an oral interview. The employees of the placement organisations, as well as a number of representatives of the sending organisations, have also given us their opinions, in both written form and in oral interviews.³ All those interviewed were asked about their motives and their personal experiences. The result was a diverse range of impressions, mutually beneficial effects, and perspectives on inter-cultural exchange.

Lots of impressions to take home and to share

Many of these personal impressions make it clear, on the one hand, why the placement organisations want to continue enabling young people from all around the world to take part in an ›incoming‹ period of voluntary service. And on the other, these positive examples can highlight the advantages of inter-cultural experience for those placement organisations who have had little to do with taking on ›incoming‹ volunteers up until now, or have perhaps only considered the obstacles involved rather than the opportunities it can bring.

Making it possible for these encounters between quite different people to take place requires the commitment of individuals who are curious, open-minded, respectful, and critical, and who also have staying power. On the following pages, you will find first of all an overview of the various organisations involved and a map of the world showing the countries of origin and the placement destinations of the volunteers. You can then read a personal presentation illustrating the various different perspectives of the players involved, and hear about their motives and experiences with their encounters within the context of an ›incoming‹ voluntary service placement in Germany.

- 1 The terms »Global South« and its partner term »Global North«, are not referring to a geographical area; this is instead a neutral method of classification used in the age of globalisation and international mobility. Previously, the terms »developing countries« as opposed to »developed countries« were used.
- 2 Categorisation of the countries which has been established by the Development Assistant Committee (DAC) of the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development). Means of Official Development Assistance (ODA) must have as key goal the promotion of the economic and social development of countries of the Global South.
- 3 The questions and interviews took place in a range of different languages. The statements were then afterwards translated into German and small linguistic adjustments may have been made in the process.

Organisations taking part

The FSJ INGLOS project is implemented by the coordinating sponsor organisations ›Freunde der Erziehungskunst Rudolf Steiners‹ (Friends of Waldorf Education) e.V. (Freunde (Friends)) and the ›Verein für internationalen und interkulturellen Austausch‹ (Association for international and inter-cultural exchange) e.V. (VIA). It is coordinated through the Arbeitskreis ›Lernen und Helfen in Übersee‹ (AKLHÜ) (Association ›Learning and Helping Overseas‹) with guidance from an advisory committee.



›incoming‹ volunteer placements allow inter-cultural encounters to take place ↗

›Freunde der Erziehungskunst Rudolf Steiners‹ (Friends of Waldorf Education) e.V. (Friends)

›Freunde der Erziehungskunst Rudolf Steiners‹ (Friends of Waldorf Education) e.V. promotes Waldorf educational theory and anthroposophical ideas on social welfare in a wide range of working areas. As a sponsor of voluntary work programmes, they make it possible for around 1,600 volunteers annually to take part in a socially-oriented placement, both within Germany and in locations around the world. Around 200 international volunteers from all over the world come to Germany to do a placement at one of their establishments via a range of different programmes.

Contact: Jaromir Palmetshofer, Telefon: 0721 354 806 170, E-Mail: j.palmetshofer@freunde-waldorf.de, www.freunde-waldorf.de

›Verein für internationalen und interkulturellen Austausch‹ (Association for international and inter-cultural exchange) e.V. (VIA)

The ›Verein für internationalen und interkulturellen Aus-

tausch‹ (Association for international and inter-cultural exchange) e.V. (VIA) was founded in 1992 to allow people from all around the world to live, learn, and work together and thus encourage mindfulness for the way we live together in our globalized world. The association sponsors a diverse range of volunteer programmes and sends young people out on placements world-wide. At the same time, VIA also takes on international volunteers who want to come to Germany. They offer internships all around the world in various specialist areas, as well as arranging accommodation with host families. VIA is a non-party organisation and not tied to any religious confession.

Contact: Christina Schulte, Telefon: 030 780 959 013, E-Mail: christina.schulte@via-ev.org, www.via-ev.org

FSJ INGLOS Coordination centre AKLHÜ

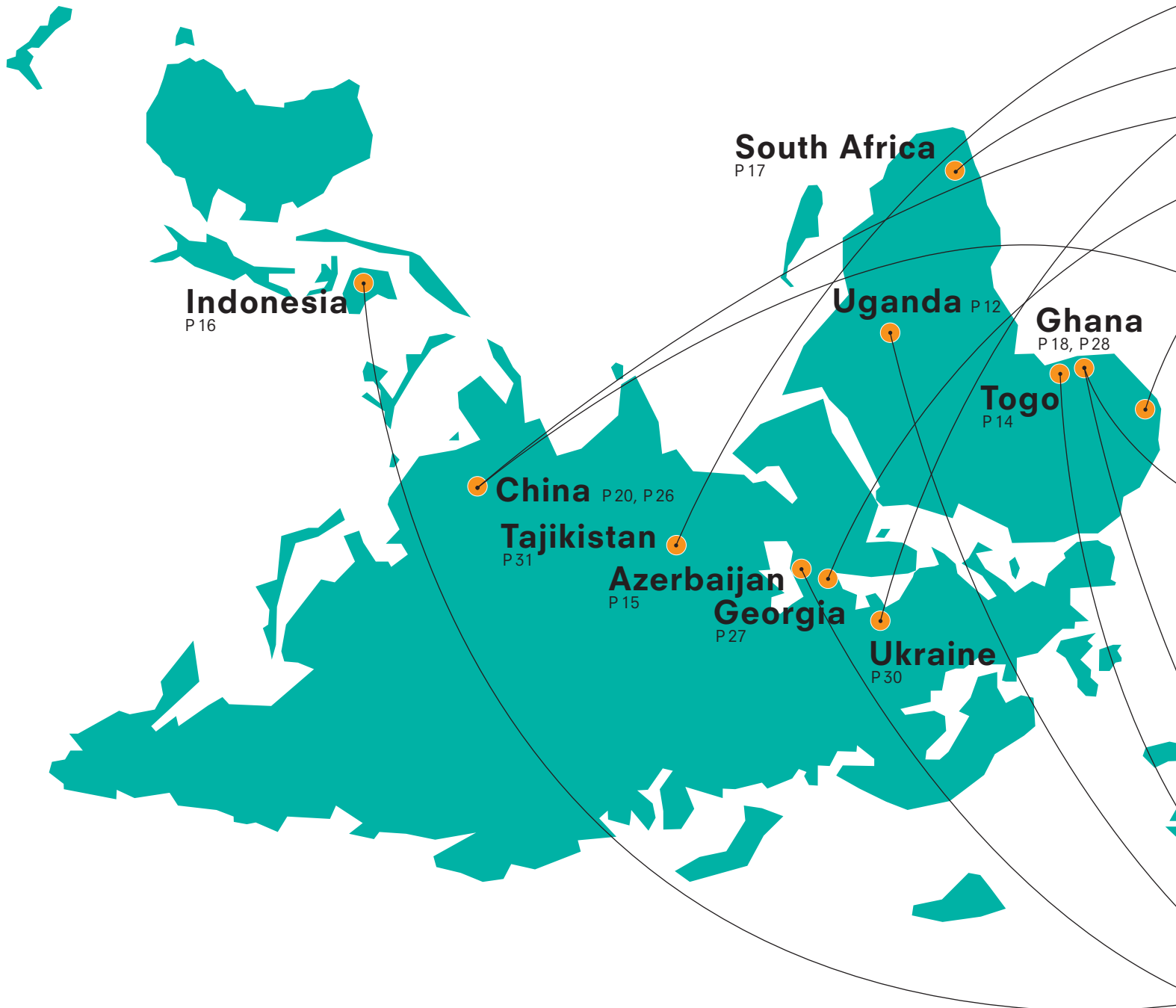
The ›Arbeitskreis Lernen und Helfen in Übersee (Association learning and helping overseas) e.V.‹ (AKLHÜ) is a central service point for all those involved in personal development cooperation projects and for members of the general public interested in political development. AKLHÜ supports its members in their efforts to achieve their goals which have been formulated together with partners in various countries around the world, thus making a positive contribution towards development. The coordination centre AKLHÜ in the FSJ INGLOS project serves as a point of contact for the sponsors supporting the project, likewise for the advisory committee, the BMFSFJ and for any other further members of the public with specialist interests in this area. Moreover, the centre coordinates public relations work and quality development, the securing of results, and political representation.

Contact: Tore Süßenguth, Arbeitskreis ›Lernen und Helfen in Übersee‹ e.V., Telefon: 0228 908 99 24, E-Mail: incoming@entwicklungsdienst.de, www.entwicklungsdienst.de

Advisory committee Project FSJ INGLOS

The FSJ INGLOS project is overseen and given guidance by an advisory committee, made up of representatives from the area of sponsorship. The goal of the supervisory committee is to offer advice, guidance and support for the project's sponsors, to secure the establishment of results, as well as dealing with any recommendations and also with external communications regarding the project. As well as representatives of the coordination centre and the sponsor of the project, the following organisations also sit on the advisory board: ›Deutsches Rotes Kreuz‹ (German Red Cross) (DRK), ›Evangelische Freiwilligendienste‹, Heim gGmbH, ›Internationale Bund‹ (IB), ›Internationale Jugendgemeinschaftsdienste‹ (IJGD), ›Katholische Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Freiwilligendienste‹.

Changing perspectives



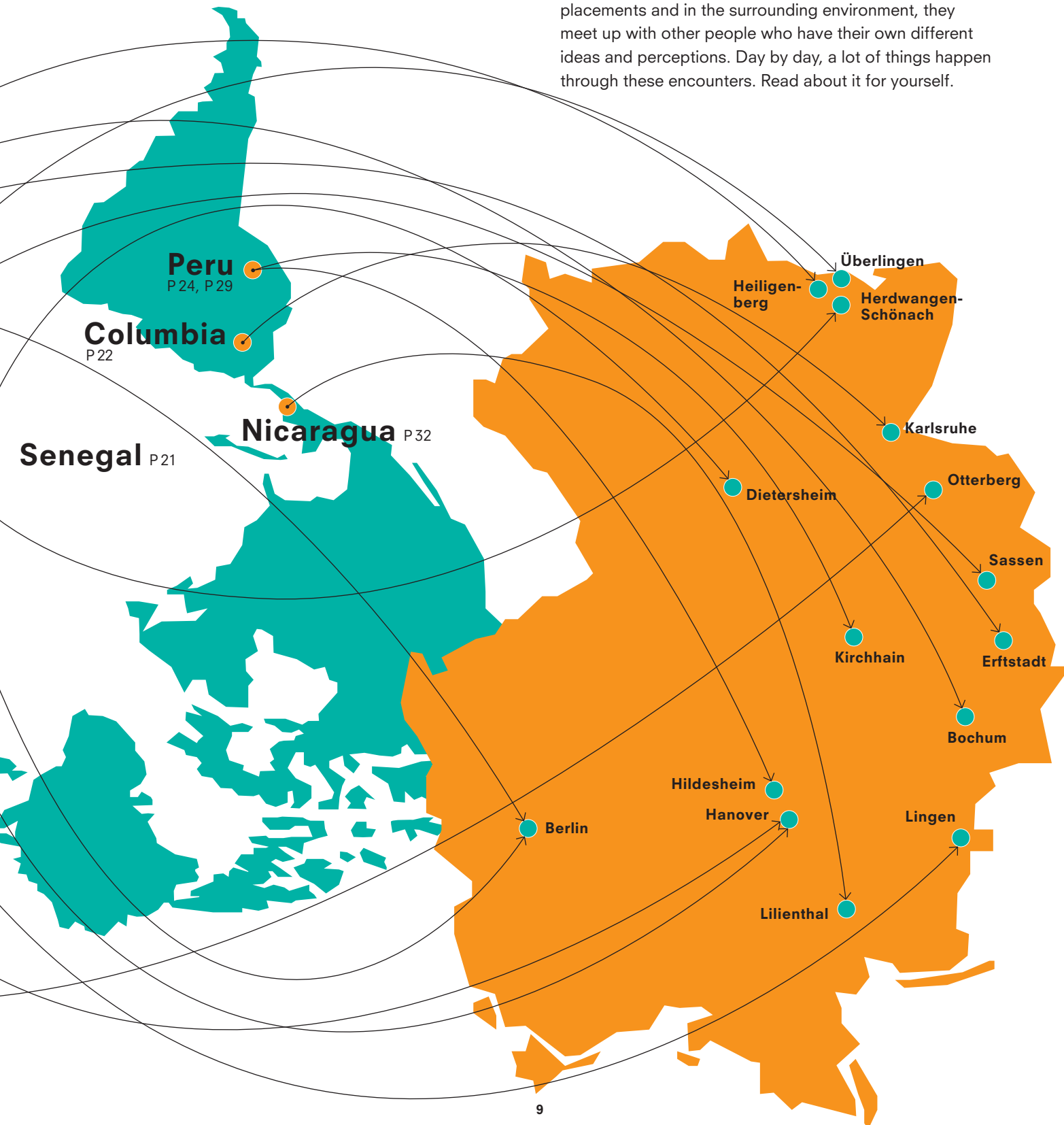
What is your first thought when you look at this map? Does something seem ›wrong‹ or at least a bit ›different‹?

The orientation to the north of the maps which we today consider to be ›normal‹ arose because sea-farers used the pole star (or North star) to navigate and find their bearings. So this actually came about by chance. But it has shaped consciousness in many areas of the world regarding the way the earth is organised. Why not turn it around for a change?

New perspectives, a new environment, new customs and traditions, and new values can at first be quite

confusing. New points of view can also help us to look at everyday questions and challenges in a new way, and to discover new things for ourselves. These are all important experiences for life in our globalised world.

The participants of the first year-group of the FSJ INGLOS project come from 14 different countries and four continents. Some of them have quite different ideas about the world to our own. Even just starting with the fact that Germany is for them far away, either to the north, west, east, north east or north west. The volunteers set off on their journey to Germany with this picture in their minds, as well as many others too. Here in their placements and in the surrounding environment, they meet up with other people who have their own different ideas and perceptions. Day by day, a lot of things happen through these encounters. Read about it for yourself.





New attitude and new perspectives
→ - FSJ INGLOS - and further incoming volunteers
come together in a seminar



Feeling at home in a new

Nina's motivation for doing a voluntary service

»I wanted to do a voluntary placement for my own personal development and so that I could get experience in the German working environment.«

Her experience in Germany

»I feel my colleagues have helped me to become really well integrated, above all when they taught me how to ride a bike.«

<u>Name:</u> Nina Lule Nassanga	<u>Learned in Germany:</u> riding a bike
<u>Age:</u> 21	<u>Placement:</u> MediClin Hedon Klinik, Lingen (NI)
<u>Comes from:</u> Uganda	<u>Tasks:</u> Assisting patients within as well as outside of the clinic, e.g. with shopping, personal hygiene, eating and drinking, helping out with special events
<u>Languages:</u> Luganda, English, German	
<u>Qualifications:</u> Computer Education and Diploma in Software Engineering	
<u>Brought with her from Uganda:</u> listening to music, cooking, watching films, playing board games, making friends	



MediClin Hedon Klinik, Lingen (NI)

Why do you host international volunteers?

»International exchange is a very enriching experience for us, yet at the same time it also represents a challenge for the whole team of carers. However, after a short period of getting used to things and perhaps overcoming initial language difficulties, the volunteers soon become fully integrated into the team. Through this exchange scheme,

our care team, the volunteers and also the patients all get the opportunity to benefit from an inter-cultural – encounter, with the associated exchange of knowledge and experience. In addition to this, the volunteers get a comprehensive insight into the working procedures of the various wards and of the clinic, as well as some valuable impressions to take home with them. «



place



new encounters
arise



On my second day in Germany, I went to the placement organisation for the first time. It takes about 45 minutes to get from my host family's house to the clinic, and that's why I was given a bike. If I had gone by bus, I would have had to change, and the buses didn't run very regularly anyway. But now I had to face a challenge, as I didn't know how to ride a bike. Back in my home country, I was always told from a young age that women belong in the kitchen. So I had never had a chance to try it out.

For this reason I decided to walk to work on the first day. When I arrived, they asked me how I had got there. «I walked», I said. I had the feeling that they thought it was a bit strange. «Nina, you'll have to learn how to ride a bike.» But I had no idea how. The next day, I walked in to work again and was questioned again. And so it continued.

It was on the morning of my first free weekend, when I heard the doorbell ring. A half a dozen of my colleagues were standing there. «We're going to teach you how to ride a bike», they called out.

We practised the whole day long and had a lot of fun. It was a great feeling to be given so much support, and the best thing was that I didn't fall off once.

On Monday, I cycled to work in the morning. At first everything went well, but shortly before I arrived at the clinic, I fell off and landed in the mud. But I didn't tell anyone about it.

When Tuesday came, I didn't dare go by bike. My colleague asked me again how I had come to work. «I walked!» I said. She gave me some encouragement. «Go on, be brave. Try coming by bike!»

One Tuesday, two weeks later, I had another try. And I managed it! I got there quickly and arrived all in one piece. Since then I have never again fallen off on the way

to work. Now I can even ride a bike through the forest with no hands!

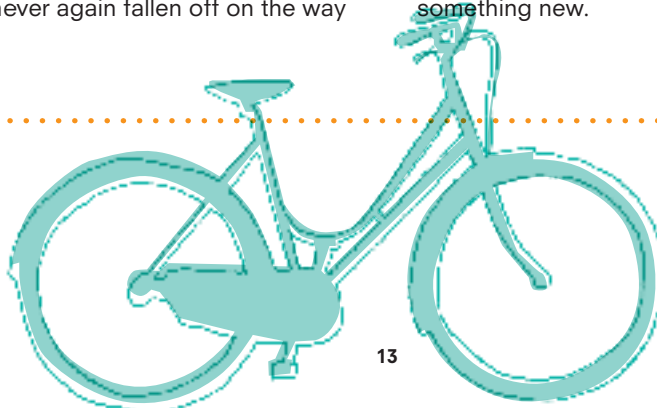
The success really did me good. I have become much more independent through being able to ride a bike.

I use my bike for even the shortest distances.

My family in Uganda didn't believe me when I told them that I had learned to ride a bike. So I made a video to show them. My friends did the filming and I rode down the street. At the end of the street, I turned around to wave at them. Suddenly a car came out in front of me. I managed to swerve out of the way, but I fell off the bike. No-one was hurt, but my family killed themselves laughing when they saw the video.

I would like to tell you one more thing. For a long time, no-one at home believed me when I told them that in Germany all sorts of people ride bikes, regardless of their income or social status. In Uganda, we had hardly given the German volunteers the chance to use a bike. I thought that didn't fit them. I assumed they would never go by bike in Germany.

Now I have got a completely new perspective on this. I have learned what a great feeling it is to be able to ride a bike myself. In the first weeks of my voluntary placement, I had already found a new hobby that I could take home with me. And in future I will be sure to allow the German volunteers who I meet to use a bike in Uganda. For them it's an old piece of their home culture, and for me something new.



It's not just about learning a language

Motivation for doing a voluntary service

Ahoéfa: »Having studied German at university, I wanted to do a voluntary placement in Germany to improve my German and get to know the German culture. I am also very interested in social work. That's why I wanted to gain experience in this area, so that I can make use of it later on in my working life. A further reason was that I wanted to spend some time away from my home country (family, friends, culture etc.) so that I could become more self-reliant and independent.«

Liyoza: »I applied for a voluntary placement because I wanted to gain some personal and practical experience, and I wanted to help other people. I also wanted to improve my German which I learned at school and through trips to Germany.«

Personal experiences

Ahoéfa: »I am working with a group of people who live together, and my colleagues and the residents are really kind to me. I feel really well looked-after. I can often help by acting as an intermediary for African or Togolese culture.«

Liyoza: »The team I work with is very conscientious. They invite me to get involved in all areas.«

Name: Ahoéfa Afi Hoedanou

Age: 22

Comes from: Togo

Languages:
French, German

Qualifications:

BA German studies –
German as a foreign
language

**Brought with her from
Togo:**

Listening to music, rea-
ding and going for walks

Discovered in Germany:
swimming

Placement:

Annastift Leben und
Lernen (Living and Lear-
ning) gGmbH, Hannover
(NI)

Tasks:

Giving assistance to
young people with phy-
sical disabilities e.g.
with getting up, eating
meals, taking showers,
shopping, cooking etc.,
accompanying them to
school or to the work-
shop



Annastift Leben und Lernen (Living and Learning) gGmbH, Hannover

Why do you take on international volunteers?

»Every year we take on around 30 volunteers from various different countries. Many of them are really keen to work with people who have a disability or impairment and in general they do this without displaying any prejudice, something which can sometimes be difficult for our German volunteers. Many of our ›incomers‹ simply accept people for who they are. This is something really admirable – we can learn a lot from them and from their way of dealing with people.«



Personal experience

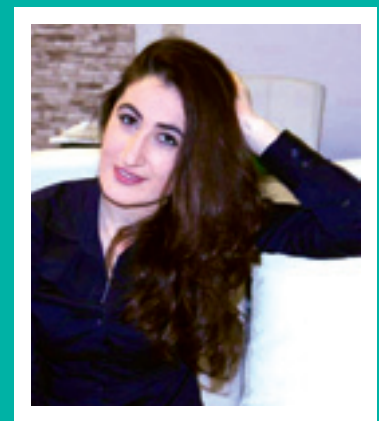
With Liyoza: »Liyoza is working in the outpatient area, and goes to visit a lot of people in their own homes. They get to know one another well and also learn about one another's everyday lives, and this has a quite special impact. In this way she can gather a lot of varied practical experience.«

With Ahoéfa: »Spending time with Ahoéfa gives our young people the chance to get an understanding of what it means to have a different and perhaps unfamiliar appearance, and helps them to grasp the connection to other countries in a better way. They wouldn't often have this opportunity in other circumstances. There is a great chance here to engage in inter-cultural learning.«

»It is important to us that the ›incomers‹ have at least a basic level of knowledge of German when they arrive. But some groups also say that gaining new perspectives and openness are more important to them than language skills.«

My colleagues in Germany ↗

<u>Name:</u> Liyoza Cavadli	<u>Placement:</u> Annastift Leben und Lernen gGmbH, Hannover (NI)
<u>Age:</u> 24	
<u>Comes from:</u> Azerbaijan	<u>Tasks:</u> Giving assistance to young people with physical disabilities, e.g. help with getting up, eating, taking a shower, shopping, cooking etc., and accompanying them to school or to the work-shop
<u>Languages:</u> Azerbaijani, German	
<u>Qualifications:</u> BA in Industrial Economics	
<u>Brought with her from Azerbaijan:</u> The desire to get to know Germany	
<u>Discovered in Germany:</u> Going out for walks	



Collecting ideas for children

Name: Muamar Kadafi
Age: 24
Comes from: Indonesia
Languages: Indonesian, English, Arabic, German
Qualifications: Business apprenticeship, degree in Economics
Brought with him from Indonesia: going hiking, interest in pets

Learned in Germany: Riding a bike, martial arts
Placement: Freie Waldorfschule (Waldorf school) Westpfalz, Otterberg (RP)
Tasks: Offering support and help in everyday school life, helping on the school farm



Muamar's personal experience

»The life here and my work in the placement organisation have really inspired me to further develop my ideas for a children's home. In the space of six months I have been able to gain a great deal of new knowledge and expertise with this in mind. I found it particularly interesting to see how compost is used for a biogas plant in the home, and I also really like the architecture of the Waldorf pre-school. I have already drawn up a model for a new building and have been able to develop this further with one of my German colleagues.«

Religious practices can be easily fitted into the working routine too, Muamar tells us, »Because I go to the mosque on Friday afternoons to pray, I've swapped my day off with someone so I come to work at the school on Saturdays instead. It has worked out really well.«



Muamar's reasons for doing a voluntary placement

»Firstly, I wanted to do a voluntary placement in order to be able to exchange experiences with other people and to get to know another culture. It was also important to me to be able to build up a good level of communication and to try to fit in well here.«

»When I get home, in addition to continuing with my degree, I want to work on further developing the children's home which I set up a few years ago with three friends. I am collecting ideas for this during my voluntary work placement.«

[Freie Waldorfschule \(Waldorf school\) Westpfalz, Otterberg](#)

History of the school

Die Freie Waldorfschule (Waldorf school) Westpfalz was founded in 1991. Parents and teachers work closely together. They create a warm and homely learning environment, with the children as focal point. They also place great emphasis on the learning of foreign languages – English and French are taught from the first year at school. International volunteers can build an important ›bridge‹ to the outside world for the children in the school.

Why do you host international volunteers?

»It gives us a great opportunity to get an insight into other, foreign cultures, to awaken curiosity, to practise tolerance and to send our Waldorf educational ideas out into the world.«

Personal experiences

»I admire the courage of the volunteers to go off for a year, so far away from home, on an unknown adventure. My experience of them is that they are open-minded, curious, self-confident and motivated individuals.«

Be strong and brave



Robin Jessica's personal experience

»The best way to understand things is to travel to the place where they came from. After eight months in Germany, I have to confirm that I can only agree with this statement. To live in another country for a period of time was my childhood dream. When I was younger, this dream was just an idea in my imagination; now it has become reality.«

When I said goodbye to my grandmother, I cried. She uttered some encouraging words for me to take with me – »be strong and brave«. I also remembered the saying »When you go abroad, you learn more about yourself than you can ever imagine«. Now I know that both these statements are true.

At home I was often not really conscious of my own cultural influences, and was not really aware of who I was. I had hardly even thought about it. With the help of the seminars and through the many conversations I have had, I have been able to develop and to get to know myself better. Sometimes I have felt quite alone and felt there was no-one there who could explain everything to me. But then I had to use my creativity and solve my problems in unusual ways. This meant moving out of my personal comfort zone. That wasn't always easy. But I often thought back to the words of my grandmother – »be strong and brave«. Now I can say this – When I set off, these were just words. Now they are experiences. I have put her wise words into practice. My dream has become reality.

Widar School, Bochum

Information on the placement

The Widar School is a modern Waldorf school with over 400 pupils, 40 teachers and two to three volunteers. Of these, at least one is always an incoming volunteer. The school is open to all children, regardless of social, cultural or confessional background. Right from the start, the children are taught two foreign languages. Our goal is that the pupils view the world with their eyes wide open.



<u>Name:</u> Robin Jessica Lucas	<u>Discovered in Germany:</u> gymnastics and aerobics
<u>Age:</u> 23	<u>Placement:</u> Widar School, Bochum (NRW)
<u>Comes from:</u> South Africa	<u>Tasks:</u> assisting the teaching staff, helping to take care of school classes and being a person the children can talk to
<u>Languages:</u> Afrikaans, English, German	
<u>Qualifications:</u> A-level equivalent, studying to become a teacher specialising in early childhood development	
<u>Brought with her from South Africa:</u> writing, including poems, drawing and painting, baking and cooking	

Robin Jessica on Gymnastics and Aerobics

»I really enjoy it and it's great meeting new people at Aerobics. We talk and laugh a lot. I look forward to it every Tuesday.«

Her plans for after the volunteer placement

»When I get back, I want to continue my teacher training and then I would like to do a Masters in Education for people with disability or impairment.«

Surprises included



↑
*The children and I
learn and play
a lot together*

Michael's reasons for doing a his voluntary service

Before doing his placement in Germany, Michael had often worked with German volunteers and they had talked a lot about inter-cultural exchange. One particular German volunteer gave him the idea of doing a period of voluntary service himself. »I see the voluntary placement as a great opportunity to learn more about other cultures, convictions and habits and, at the same time, it gives me the chance to show my own culture to people from other countries.«

His plans for after the placement

Michael wants to set up his own organisation in Ghana, so that he can help his local community using the experience he has gained in Germany. It is especially important to him to show children new ways of learning.



Der Friedrichshagener Kinderladen (pre-school) e.V.

Why do you host international volunteers?

»As well as German volunteers, we also take on ›incomers‹ because this gives our ›Kinderladen‹ a real mix of cultures. It is lovely because the children learn to deal with people who can only speak a little German, at least at the beginning. They have to learn to deal with the situation and see that things don't always have to be done in a straightforward way.«

Our learning outcomes

»We have learned with and from Michael how differently one can go about things, and we have also become aware of where the limits of our perspectives lay up until now.«

»In the beginning, we were not sure what we could do to assist Michael's and our own integration process. We invited him to eat with us and to parties and celebrations and he could then get to know lots of families. In the process, we learned that integration is a very individual process and that there is no patent recipe. Everybody loved his music project and this was a very important element.«

Michael's personal experience

The story of how Michael came to have a new hobby, playing football, is a rather unusual one.



Here in Berlin one day, I found a wallet lying on the street. It was full of cash and cards, but there was no ID card. All I could find was the business card of a football coach. I went to the address on the card with a friend. It turned out that the wallet belonged to the football coach. He was of course very pleased and he asked me what I was doing in Berlin. So I told him all about my voluntary placement and my life here. Then he invited me quite in the spur of the moment to come to football training. For me that was a surprising reward for finding the wallet. I now have a new hobby, new friends and I feel accepted on an equal basis outside of my placement too. Apart from this, I have unfortunately found that people in Berlin often look at me quite critically because of the colour of my skin and they are quite reserved in their behaviour towards me.



Name:
Michael Kwadwo Ofori
Age: 23
Comes from: Ghana
Languages: Fante, English, German
Qualifications:
High school exams, followed by training as a dance and drumming teacher
Brought with him from Ghana:
singing, dancing and drumming (mostly only at work)

Discovered in Germany:
football
Placement:
Friedrichshagener Kinderladen (pre-school), Berlin (BE)
Tasks:
singing, playing in the garden, telling stories, helping with clearing up and washing up

Valuable differences

Freie Waldorfschule (Waldorf school) Erfstadt:

Why do you host international volunteers?

»For many years now, a number of our school pupils have been going abroad as volunteers.

It was in fact a former school pupil who gave me the impetus to act when she asked me »Why haven't we got any ›incoming‹ volunteers at our school?«

We took on the first ›incoming‹ volunteer in the school year 2015/16. [...] Through these exchanges, we hope to really understand in practice the fact that we as mankind, and in particular as Waldorf schools, all live in One world, and through the knowledge gained about different living conditions and situations, we hope to understand one another better and be in a better position to offer support.«

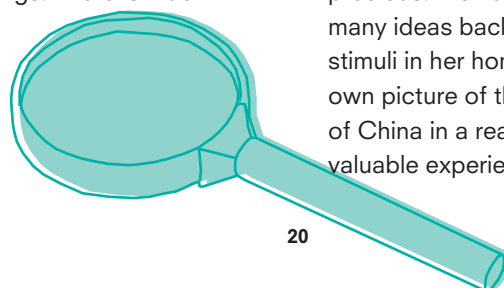
Luxin's personal experience

»I like the fact that there is close contact with the parents at the Waldorf school, allowing the school to develop in a positive way. For example, there are many special events and celebrations according to the changing seasons. These are organised by the children, parents, teachers and myself, all working together. As a result, I believe that the Waldorf school has more of a feeling of a bonded social community than other schools, and I like their educational techniques.

In making a comparison with life in China, Luxin has now »got used to the cold food (evening snack – ›Abendbrot‹) in Germany«, which was strange for her at first because she always likes to have a warm meal back at home.

Another thing she really likes is the fact that people use their bikes for shorter journeys and that there is a perfect network of cycle paths – even in the forest! It only takes 10 minutes on foot to get from her host family's house to the forest.

She says »I will never forget the landing in Frankfurt. When I got my first sight of Frankfurt from the plane, I could only see trees and no buildings. There is much more green in German cities.«



Luxin's reasons for doing a voluntary service

»I really wanted to do a voluntary placement because I am very interested in Waldorf educational theory and I also have a degree in German Studies. I see it as a good opportunity to find out what Germany is really like.«



Name: Luxin Deng

Age: 22

Comes from: China

Languages: Mandarin, English, German

Qualifications:

BA in German Studies

Brought with her from

China:

dancing, reading

Learned in Germany:

knitting

Placement:

Freie Waldorfschule (Waldorf school) Erfstadt, Erfstadt (NRW)

Tasks:

assisting the children in Year 2 with writing, drawing shapes, mathematics and so on, offering support to the teaching staff

In Germany, Luxin is living with a host family.

Luxin's host ›mum‹ tells us:

»DFor us, the most interesting observation is the comparison of cultures. It has only been since Luxin has been here that we have learned to really appreciate how privileged we are in our country in regards to ecological, social and political issues, as well as in the opportunity we have to benefit from Waldorf education. We find her appreciation for the things that she has experienced here very precious. We have the impression that Luxin will be taking many ideas back with her which might act as positive stimuli in her homeland. We were also able to refresh our own picture of the treasures of the ancient high culture of China in a real-life exchange visit. That was also a very valuable experience.«

A strong team

El Hadji Gora's motivation for doing a voluntary service

His friends had often told him about Germany. »I wanted to find out about life and work in Germany. I was really interested in going there. I also found it really exciting working with the people there. As I had never before worked with people with a disability, I was able to get a placement in Senegal observing the work involved in this area before making the decision to go ahead.“

At the beginning of his service period, »encountering such friendly people and being taken in so warmly« really made El Hadji Gora feel welcome.

Looking back on his experiences so far, he says, »I feel very happy in my team. My colleagues are very committed, motivated and friendly people who take responsibility for what they do. I have noticed that I have become more self-sufficient over the course of time, and that I am being given more responsibility in my work with the disabled. I feel that I have been well-accepted here and consider myself to be just a »normal« volunteer. Just like the German volunteers.«



Name: El Hadji Gora Kebe
Age: 23

Comes from: Senegal

Languages:
Wolof, French, English,
German

Qualifications/ working
experience:

A-level equivalent,
various activities in a
school, in a bakery, in
agriculture and also at
a pre-school

Brought with him from
Senegal: Listening to
music and playing foot-
ball

Placement:
Camphill Dorfgemeinschaft
(village community) Hau-
senhof, Dietersheim (BW)

Tasks:
Giving support to people
with disability or im-
pairment with work in
the garden, helping out
with clearing up and
cleaning

Camphill Dorfgemeinschaft (village community) Hausenhof

Why do you host international volunteers?

»The ›incoming‹ service is integration in the broadest sense of the word. A range of differing viewpoints are brought together, and new types of community can be formed. It is logical that commitment is needed from our side in order to offer ›bridges‹ to these young people to be able to cross over into our team and into the world of work.«

A further argument for these ›incoming‹ placements is the exchange of experiences which is made possible, as well as the chance to learn from one another. When we look a little further than our own garden gate, socio-cultural differences can in fact be experienced overall as an enrichment for us.

As a general, across-the-board motto for the work with volunteers, we could say we are »bringing young people closer to social work and so awakening their interest.«

The ›incoming‹ volunteer service promotes encounters which can develop into sustained, long term friendships.

»Despite the initial difficulties with language and culture, we managed to develop a good collaborative relationship. In some cases, contacts and friendships have been sustained for many years.«

Learning through life is the special



Direct communication with strangers is something which is quite untypical for Germany. I got the impression, before and at the beginning of my voluntary placement, that the Germans were very cold and didn't seem to want to get close to other people. In the meantime, I believe that the Germans actually do like forming new relationships, but they are not used to doing so in public situations. To try and get this across in a better way, I would like to tell a story:

It was my first week in Germany. It was difficult to understand the language, and even more difficult to say anything myself. This was the setting in which I had to start work. On a piece of paper I had written down the numbers of the bus and the train which I needed to take to get to work. On the first day, everything was pretty straightforward. The bus and the train were both on time and the worries I had had proved to be unfounded. I was very grateful that the local transport system worked so well here. On the third day, I checked the number of the bus as usual – number 110 – and got in. It arrived with about a minute's difference in time from the day before. I didn't worry about that. But suddenly the bus changed direction. I rushed up to the front of the bus and asked the driver whether he was going to Malsch station. With a rather unfriendly look, he made it clear to me that I had taken the wrong bus. So I got out and waited for the next number 110 bus. I got in and asked the bus driver in a very quiet and shy voice »Malsch station?« With a slight nod of his head, he said »Yes«.

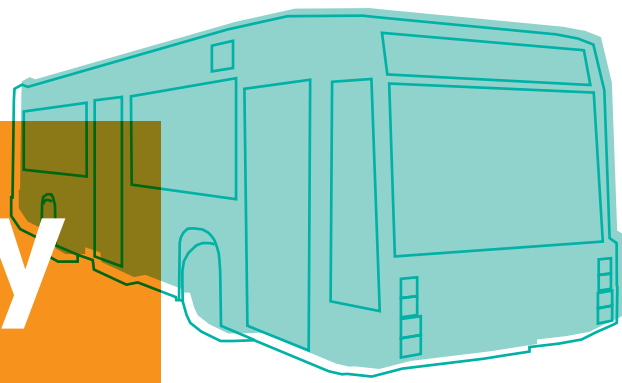
The next morning, I was feeling quite unsure of myself and rather anxious, even though travelling by bus is such a simple thing. I repeated to myself over and over again in my head that I had to speak clearly and ask whether the bus was the right one. When the bus finally arrived and the doors opened, I saw the same bus driver as on the

day before – the one in the »right« bus – and asked him once again »Malsch station?« And he said, »Yes«. And so I came to realise that the same bus driver always drove this route every day. Every morning I was very happy when I saw his familiar face, because I knew that I was on the right bus. For about two weeks, I got on to the bus every morning, saw the bus driver, smiled and gave him a friendly »Morning!« and got no answer. Until one morning, when I got into the bus, and before I even had time to smile, he looked at me, smiled and said »Morning!«. That really made my day. I started to feel a little bit more at home.

On this day, I became conscious of the fact that my culture and my everyday experiences from Columbia are something which lie deep inside me and that they will always be a part of me, wherever I go.

My cultural character and imprint become visible even in the smallest of things in everyday life, and I am happy and proud to be actively taking part in a very important cultural exchange where I can get so deeply involved. Now I have a better understanding of the various different ways of approaching people in relationships here in Germany, as well as in my home country. They often have the same intention but it just comes across differently.





everyday aspect



Name: Juana Botero Gómez
 Age: 24
 Comes from: Columbia
 Languages: Spanish, English, German
 Qualifications: A-level equivalent from the Waldorf school, Apprenticeship as a fashion designer, Studying to become a Waldorf teacher
 Brought with her from Columbia: dancing the tango
 Discovered in Germany: going for walks in the countryside
 Plans for after the placement: continuing with studies
 Placement: Parzival (school) centre Karlsruhe (BW)
 Tasks: offering help in a class fro refugees and doing out-of-school activities with refugees, helping with the after-school club at the school in the afternoons

Juana's reasons for doing a voluntary service

»Ever since I was at school, I have always dreamed of living and working in a different environment. I chose Germany because I am interested in Waldorf educational theory and in particular because I thought that, in cultural terms, life here would in many ways be very different from everyday life in Columbia.«

Parzival Centre Karlsruhe

Some information about the placement

The Parzival Centre in Karlsruhe is home to several state-recognised schools which are funded independently, as well as a pre-school with integrated pre-school groups, a crèche and a pre-school for special needs children. As of the school year 2014/15, they have been running educational events for unaccompanied refugees under the age of 18. The ›Parzival-Jugendhilfe‹ (youth work initiative) was founded in 2015 to take on the care and support of unaccompanied refugees under the age of 18. Every year there are more and more volunteers coming to work in the centre.

Juana's personal experience of working in Germany.

»My first impression of Germany was that the people were very reserved. My colleagues are only colleagues and not friends. Clear rules are the most important foundation for living together here, even if the rules are in themselves not so important. I have experienced situations where people, when asked, will defend these rules and will make it clear that they have to be followed, even when they can see that sticking to the rules won't change anything. It hasn't always been easy for me to fit in with these rules. Another thing is that Germans like complaining when things go wrong. On the other hand, people here are very well-organised, formalities are never complicated, and things never have a range of different meanings. That makes it easier for me to understand the meaning. The Germans have a very polite way of saying things directly, and that makes many things easier.«

With a love of music

Name: Branko Joaquin Carranza Rabanal
Age: 19
Comes from: Peru
Languages: Spanish, English, German
Qualifications: A-level equivalent
Brought with him from Peru: football
Discovered in Germany: riding a bike and going for walks
Plans for after the placement: Degree in Environmental Protection

Placement: Arpeggio Hildesheim (NI)
Tasks: teaching children to take care of instruments, helping children with musical exercises, offering assistance to the teaching staff in the string instrument classes and in the orchestra, maintaining and doing translation for the website.



Reasons for the period of voluntary service

The thing which is special about Keizyu and Branko is that they themselves learned to play their instruments in the context of a socially-oriented music project back in Peru. They are the first volunteers with this particular background to have been sent to Germany. They can both build their own quite personal 'bridges' by bringing their own experiences as former participants into their current supporting role as volunteers.

Branko: »I came to Germany because I can have the chance here to teach the children the things that I have learned myself. I am very highly motivated. Some of the German volunteers I met in Peru were also role models for me.«

Keizyu: »The idea of doing a voluntary placement in Germany was of particular interest to me because I wanted to gain more experience in the educational field before starting the practical part of my degree in Education.«

Personal experience

Keizyu: »I admire the creative way this project has been implemented and also the effort and patience which has been put into the project.«

Branko: »I used to think that Germans had no sense of humour. Now that I've got to know them, I have found that many people here are really witty. They also live in a very beautiful area of the country. But it is simply too cold for me here!« »I really like working in a school where most of the children don't actually have German roots. This means that I get to experience many different cultures and traditions, and become aware of how they all have a different way of life. To some extent, we have this kind of diversity in Peru too.«

Both report that they have had mostly positive experiences, and feel that they have been received with open arms and have been able to fit in well. At the moment, both are considering whether to extend their stays for a further few months in order to learn more (German) so that they will be better qualified, for example, to work on international music projects when they are back in Peru.





I offer them my help

Name:

Keizyu Romero Fernández

Age: 20

Comes from: Peru

Languages: Spanish, English, German

Qualifications: A-level equivalent and studying for degree in Education

Brought with her from Peru:

reading, running, dancing and giving music lessons

Plans for after the voluntary placement:

continuing her degree in Education

Placement:

Arpeggio Hildesheim (NI)

Tasks: teaching children to take care of instruments, helping children with musical exercises, offering assistance to the teaching staff in the string instrument classes and in the orchestra, maintaining and doing translation for the website.

Arpeggio Hildesheim

Why do you take on ›incoming‹ volunteers?

During a volunteer placement in Peru, one of the founders of our association got to know people from the Arpeggio Music school in Trujillo. The children and young people there receive instrument tuition regardless of their financial background. By playing together in the orchestra, the children get an enthusiasm for music and, at the same time, experience what it's like to be part of a viable community and have the chance to develop perspectives for their own future lives.

With regret, the founders noticed that, here in Germany, the question of whether a child will be able to develop its musical talents and personality in this way is heavily dependant on the economic situation of the child's parents. With this in mind, they founded the association ›Verein Arpeggio Hildesheim e.V.‹

»The Peruvian project is our role model«

(Founder of Arpeggio Hildesheim e.V.)

»We want to reach children who have, up to now, had no access to music.«

What added value does taking on ›incoming‹ volunteers have for you?

»By taking on international volunteers, we show our pupils that in our project, non-European young people also have the chance to take on the role of instructor and take on responsibility. It becomes clear that being able to speak perfect German is not a prerequisite for good interpersonal communication. Neither skin colour, mother tongue nor social status are the deciding factors, but instead musical abilities, a sense of responsibility and positive motivation.«

Quote from the teacher of the string instrument class, where Keizyu and Branko help out:

»I think both of our volunteers are great. They are committed, they get on with the children well and they are overflowing with enthusiasm. They are a great enrichment for us. I am almost starting to think that it might be a good idea to work on improving my own language skills. [...] The project is really a great success.«



Waldorfkindergarten
Prenzlauer Berg e. V.

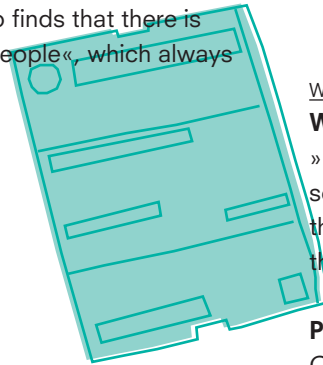


A new type of order

Mengyao's personal experience

»The Germans are always very kind and very trusting,« is Mengyao's experience. In the beginning, she had the feeling that everything in Germany has to run according to a certain order. But this view has changed over the course of time. She gives us an example:

»I travel every day by bus and train in Berlin. I have noticed that a lot of people have a monthly ticket, others just buy a ticket for that day, and quite a few also travel without one. For me this is a prime example of having a freer form of order in Germany. In China, you are checked at every stage when you travel by train – when you leave the train as well as when you get in. The tickets are also made out for a particular person. Here, I have only been checked twice, although I have been here for at least six months now.« Otherwise, Mengyao finds that there is »a huge amount of trust between people«, which always surprises her.



Mengyao's reasons for doing a period of voluntary service

»I wanted to do a voluntary placement because I like Germany. I am interested in German culture. I worked as a volunteer in a pre-school back in China and this gave me the idea to apply.«

What are you planning to do when you get back?

»I have already done an internship at a publishing house and I'll try to get work in this area.«

Waldorfkindergarten (pre-school) Prenzlauer Berg, Berlin

Why do you host international volunteers?

»Mengyao is our first »incoming« volunteer. Our pre-school has quite an international base and because of this we are starting to focus increasingly on inter-cultural themes. Her application fitted in well with this.«

Personal experience

Colleagues from Mengyao's group at the pre-school have reported that a different culture of communication has arisen in the group since Mengyao has been a part of it. The children also make more efforts to listen attentively and they see the German language in a different way now. »None of us had expected this to happen«, one of the group leaders tells us.

Name: Mengyao Xu

Age: 23

Comes from: China

Languages: Mandarin, English, German

Qualifications:

studying for a degree in German with a focus on International Journalism

Brought with her from China: writing stories and taking photos

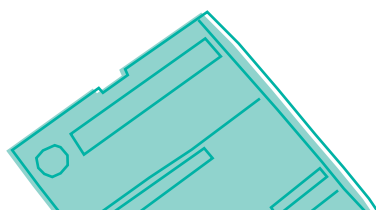
Placement:

Waldorfkindergarten (pre-school) Prenzlauer Berg, Berlin (BE)

Tasks:

helping out in everyday life at the pre-school, preparing meals, clearing up and washing up, playing with the children

»In the future, we want to move away from our »German sense of order« a little bit and we are trying to become a bit more relaxed about things. Mengyao's involvement has forced us to think about how »incoming« volunteers, children and employees can gain mutual benefit from one another.«



Learning from and supporting one another



Name:
Tornike Gobejishvili

Age: 24

Comes from: Georgia

Languages: Georgian, English, German

Qualifications:
studying Law

Learned in Germany:
craftsmanship

Plans for after the placement:
perhaps continue with university studies

Placement:
Camphill Schulgemeinschaft (school community) Bruckfelden (BW) until 01/2016, then from 02/2016 Lebensgemeinschaft (living community group) Sassen (RP)

Tasks:
giving help and support to people with disability or impairment, assistance with leisure activities with children, help with practical household tasks and helping out in a dyeing workshop

Tornike's reasons for doing a period of voluntary service

»I decided to do a voluntary placement because I was feeling rather unsure about my course of studies. I wanted to get some practical experience and get to know a new culture.«

His personal experience in Germany

Tornike summed up his experience as follows: »When you are here, you don't have your friends and family around you. And sometimes you have a lot of worries, everyone has those. And then you have to decide for yourself what to do. You have to accept the situation as it is and not hope that you are going to get help from anyone else. Having accepted this fact, I can now approach problems in a better way and am more able to motivate myself. It has been good experience for my future life. This experience has made me grow stronger. And even when I am back with my friends and family in the future, I will remember it.

The importance of language

»For me it is also really important to learn German because I love the German language and German poetry. I would like to be able to understand the poems of Hermann Hesse. When I am reading, I always have to look up words on the Internet, and that's tiring. I want to carry on learning German and after that read more.«

Lebensgemeinschaft (living community) Sassen (RP)

Personal experience

»In our big family, the volunteers witness the efforts which we make to build a community; we try to integrate, develop and encourage all the various different talents which we have here. For one year, they become a member of a house community and they help with care and support, as well as in the workshops.«

»Essentially, the voluntary work placement consists of getting to know and understand other people, working with others, giving and receiving support, and learning from one another – in the family, at work and after work.«



Inter-cultural ›bridges‹ to the whole world

Samuel's reasons for doing a voluntary service

»I decided to apply to do a voluntary placement in Germany because it could lead to a lot of opportunities for my further professional development. As I had already worked for a year as a teacher in Thailand, I would like to make use of this opportunity to gain even more skills.«

Name:
Samuel Benjamin Nettey

Age: 22

Comes from: Ghana

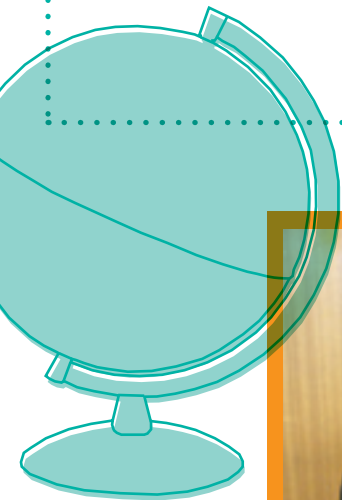
Languages: Ghanaian,
English, German

Qualifications:
A-level equivalent

Discovered in Germany:
jogging by Lake
Constance

Placement:
Lebens- und Arbeitsge-
meinschaft (living and
working community) Lau-
tenbach e.V., Lautenbach

Tasks:
Living and working in
a group with nine peo-
ple with disability or
impairment (24-36 years
old), helping them with
eating, cooking, per-
sonal hygiene, leisure
activities and cleaning.



His personal experience

»In the beginning I felt a bit lost here – as an international volunteer in an environment which was completely new to me with a different culture. Over the course of time, things got better and in the meantime, I have managed to build very good relationships with my colleagues. I hope we will stay in touch after the end of my voluntary service. I have experienced some great hospitality here.«

*Here I am going
for a walk
with residents* →

Lebens- und Arbeitsgemeinschaft (living and working community) Lautenbach e.V.

Why do you take on international volunteers?

»The majority of our volunteers are German (around 30), but we always have some ›incomers‹. It does us good to take on ›incoming‹ volunteers. It expands our horizons, as this inter-cultural exchange is beneficial for all those involved. It is important to us that our clients in particular get some ›outside of Europe‹ experience, something which they would not have access to otherwise.«

Personal experience

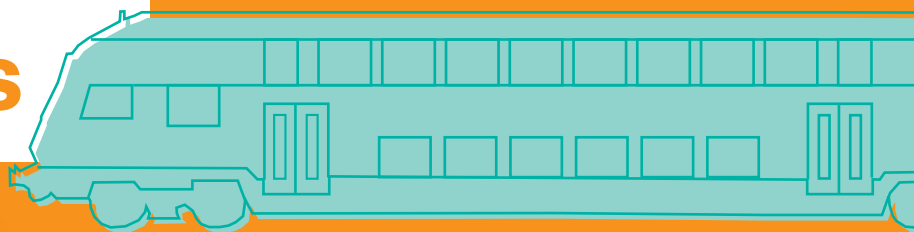
»At the beginning, many ›incomers‹ need a bit more time to get used to the work and they also need people who are prepared to look after them. From the point of view of personal responsibility, I have observed that, on the one hand, you need to spend a good amount of time at the beginning arranging things [dealing with the authorities, opening a bank account, language course, getting used to the work, structuring your everyday life and your free time activities] But on the other hand, as well as bringing specialist skills with them, many ›incomers‹ come equipped with a particularly good instinct for interacting with people with disabilities and impairments. Samuel, for example, learned to fit in quickly, is very sensitive to other people's feelings and has no inhibitions about working with people with disabilities. »Working with people with disability always requires a change in perspective. This makes it relatively easy for us as an organisation to build both cultural and geographical ›bridges‹.«

››Incoming‹ volunteers help us to live out in practice the concept of the diversity of humankind. They help us to build inter-cultural ›bridges‹ which extend far outside of our very rural region [near Lake Constance] and out into the world.«





New friends



<u>Name:</u> Sorayda Arana Huaman	<u>Plans for after the placement:</u> to train for a technical profession in Peru
<u>Age:</u> 21	<u>Placement:</u> Heilpädagogische Gemeinschaft (curative education community), Kirchhain (HE)
<u>Comes from:</u> Peru	<u>Tasks:</u> helping the children in music therapy, playing with the children and helping them in everyday activities
<u>Languages:</u> Spanish, German	
<u>Qualifications:</u> A-level equivalent	
<u>Brought with her from Peru:</u> making music	
<u>Discovered in Germany:</u> meeting friendly people from all around the world, learned Eurythmie	

My journeys of discovery in Germany

Heilpädagogische Gemeinschaft (curative education community) Kirchhain

Why do you take on ›incoming‹ volunteers?

The Heilpädagogische Gemeinschaft (curative education community) provides a home for babies, children and young people with multiple disabilities and neurological problems. We take on around eight volunteers a year for placements, of which about five are international volunteers. We have been taking on ›incoming‹ volunteers for more than 15 years now.

Soraydas Motivation für einen Freiwilligendienst

»Meine Tante ist Klassenlehrerin in einer Waldorfschule [in Peru] und ich habe sie oft begleitet. Dort habe ich großes Interesse an der Waldorfpädagogik bekommen. Durch meinen Freiwilligendienst möchte ich außerdem mehr über die deutsche Kultur erfahren.«

»They bring the world to us!«, as one member of staff put it. »Without these volunteers, the people we look after here would have little contact with other cultures. The volunteers bring a different cultural input with them and share their stories with us.«



Personal experience

In the days leading up to the time when a new volunteer arrives, there is always great excitement and joyful anticipation amongst the residents. Plans are made, and we decide who will be allowed to go the station to pick them up. Everyone is excited...who will it be, what will he/she look like?...

One of the staff explains, »For our residents, the ›incoming‹ volunteers are seen as being free of any associated stress. They come as friends and, in the course of their placement, they share a lot of personal things with us, e.g. by cooking one of their own dishes or giving presentations about their homeland and their families.«

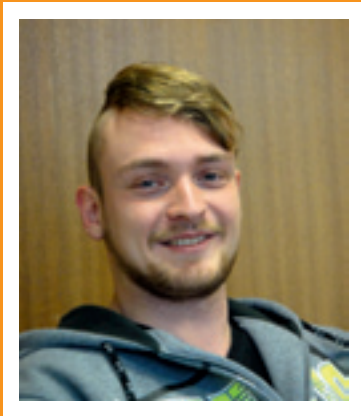
Her personal experience of Germany

Sorayda reports that she is managing quite well to share her experience of Waldorf education and to learn from the children and the other members of staff. She sums up as follows: »As a volunteer in another country, I am sharing my everyday life and my work with people from other parts of the world. These are people who have a feeling for solidarity and a high level of motivation for teamwork. I have made valuable contacts, both personally and professionally. I would like to further extend my network of international contacts. This is something of great importance in our globalised and highly competitive world.«

I am getting to know myself better

Oleksii's reasons for doing a voluntary service

»Voluntary work is giving me the opportunity to get to know myself better. I can learn German as well as gain a lot of personal and also professional experience in the area of social work. [...] As there is war in my country, we need people who will get involved with social issues in order to push forward with peace« plans.«



His plans for after the placement:

Oleksii would like to undergo training for a profession and wants to help people in his home country to live in peace. If he were to go back now, however, it is possible that he would be called up to go and fight. But he hopes for peace in the Ukraine and that he can return there after the war as a social worker.

His personal experience

»«I am enjoying the fact that I can travel around a lot in Germany without any problems. This means that I have also made friends outside of the placement location. I also have time to reflect on life and on my voluntary work and, when I am travelling, I learn to understand myself better. The many really interesting seminars offered by the German organisation are really helpful in this respect.«

Name: Oleksii Drahanets
Age: 22
Comes from: Ukraine
Languages: Ukrainian, Russian, English, German
Qualifications: Diploma in Finance and Applied Linguistics
Brough with him from Ukraine: the desire to travel
Continued doing in Germany: even more travelling

Placement: Camphill Schulgemeinschaft (school community) Brachenreute, Überlingen (BW)
Tasks: offering support to the children and helping them with leisure activities, practical household jobs, assistance with care activities

Camphill Schulgemeinschaft (School community) Brachenreute Überlingen (BW):

Why do you take on international volunteers?

»For us, these new ways of viewing things and new approaches are very important and they add something to our everyday routines and work. The time-consuming and difficult phase of getting used to things means that working procedures and methods have to be constantly reflected upon. To be honest, we have to admit that our common path is often a bit bumpy at the start, and now and then there are also a few unanticipated difficulties with understanding one another or with homesickness, which can make living together more difficult. But this also requires and promotes the perception abilities of the people who live and work here. Furthermore, the personal guidance and support of the sponsor organisations in this respect really pays off.«

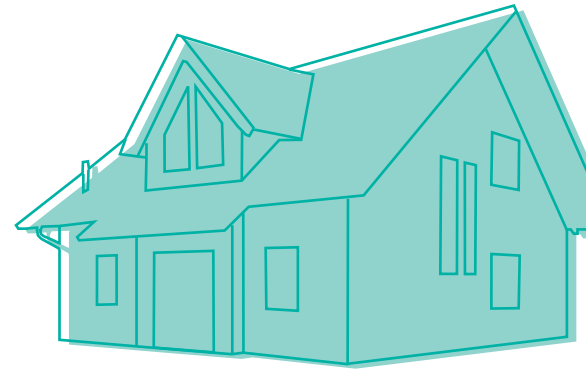
Personal experience

»This year we were looking for strong men who would be able to help our teams in their work with teenage boys. We found just such a young man in Oleksii, one who could devote himself to the task with his powerful presence and friendly manner.«

»With the international volunteers, we often experience an extraordinarily high level of motivation and the strong will to get really involved and make the most of this year as a ›once in a lifetime‹ opportunity.«



Living under one roof



Camphill Dorfgemeinschaft (village community) Hermansberg (BW):

Why do you take on international volunteers?

Over 20 years ago, there were one or two volunteers from Denmark who came here to work. This gave us the impetus to start becoming more internationally focused, step by step. In particular, the past ten years working with the sponsor organisation »Freunde«(Friends) have helped us to learn to deal with the bureaucratic and administrative hurdles which are involved. Today we manage to fill around 50-75% of our voluntary placements with »incoming« volunteers.

We consider it essential for the success of an international project like this that we have a choice of volunteers. This gives us the chance to match up the volunteers with potential living groups. For this you need a good system in place. We have seen a good deal of progress in this respect in our cooperation work with and at the sponsor organisations.

<p><u>Name:</u> Abdulloev Ibrohimkhuja</p> <p><u>Age:</u> 18</p> <p><u>Comes from:</u> Tajikistan</p> <p><u>Languages:</u> Tajik (Persian), Russian, German, English</p> <p><u>Qualifications:</u> High school exams, Preparation course to study Biology</p> <p><u>Brought with him from Tajikistan:</u> hairdressing skills</p>	<p><u>Discovered in Germany:</u> riding a bike, going on trips, visiting cultural sites and learning the German language</p> <p><u>Placement:</u> Camphill Dorfgemeinschaft (village community) Hermansberg (BW)</p> <p><u>Tasks:</u> helping and supporting people with disability in their living group, helping them with work in the garden area.</p>
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In the Camphill Dorfgemeinschaft (village community), it has become clear that you can really only get to know other people and understand the cultural differences and commonalities if »you live and work with them under one roof«. It's something quite different to read about things in books or to visit a place as a tourist«

»Furthermore, we want to give these young people lots of learning experiences for them to take home with them to make use of later on in their professional lives.«

Personal experiences

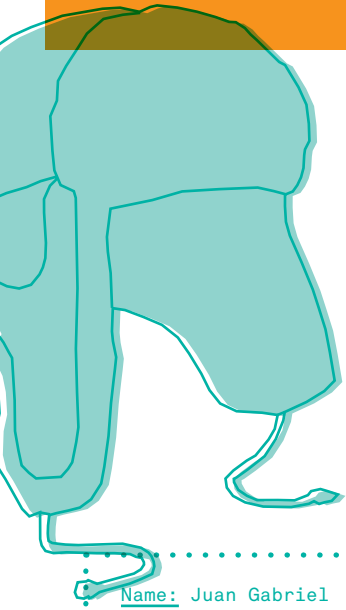
Working together and living together is »very dynamic«. One member of staff reports, »At the beginning we often observed that there was a culture shock being experienced by both the volunteers and the employees. In this case, guidance and support from all those involved is needed. But this situation also presents great opportunity for learning for all of us.«



Ibrohimkhuja's reasons for doing a voluntary service

»I learned German for two years at school. My teacher knew the organization which is sponsoring me and she recommended that I do a voluntary work placement. She helped me a lot with the preparations and is still keeping an eye on my progress now.« Ibrohimkhuja explains, »At the beginning, everything was so theoretical and incomprehensible for me. Now things are more practical. I have learned a lot and have a lot of fun at work with my colleagues and the people I look after.

Humour builds relationships



Juan's personal experience

Juan came to Germany in December. He likes the winter and the cold weather, he tells us. »I've never experienced anything like it. In my home country, – the temperature never drops below 30 degrees.« In Bremen he often walks around wearing just a T-shirt, even outside. Everyone stares at him in disbelief. »I'm not cold«, he says in February. We will wait and see how long he can keep this up, and whether the start of spring will come before the novelty has worn off.

Name: Juan Gabriel Zamoran Alarcon
Age: 18
Comes from: Nicaragua
Languages: Spanish, German
Qualifications: High school exams
Brought with him from Nicaragua: Fitness studio, base-ball, boxing
Learned in Germany: German, German humour and German comedians

Placement: Diakonische Behindertenhilfe (support for people with disability) Lilienthal, Bremen (HB)
Tasks: help and support for three people with disability, helping them with getting up, washing, dressing and undressing and accompanying them to work

Diakonische Behindertenhilfe (support for people with disability) Lilienthal, Bremen (HB):

Why do you take on international volunteers?

»We first took on international volunteers during the Ukraine crisis. It was important to us to show solidarity and so we replied to an appeal which we saw in the newspaper. We take on »incoming« volunteers if we feel that they will fit in well here. One difficulty which we see is that international volunteers rarely have the opportunity to try out working in a similar job in advance. Normally we make that a condition of acceptance.«

Juan only started learning German two months before he set off. Since he has been here, he has been using every spare moment to practise his German. »I used to have 100% Spanish music on my phone; now I have 100% German songs. Sido is one of my favourites!«

To learn a language with and from children is a well-known concept and helps with integration. Juan says, »I watch KIKA and Toggo. KIKA is like A1 level German and Toggo like A2. I'm starting to understand more and more.« He also likes watching YouTube videos of German comedians. »I still don't understand very much. But their facial expressions and gestures help me to understand them better. His dream is to be able to finally understand German humour. That's both a challenge and also an incentive.

After two months, he speaks very good German and is already telling his first jokes. His own personal change in perspectives.

»Juan brings with him a huge amount of courage. For one whole year, he has left his family and his friends, and thrown himself into life in a different culture and into speaking a new language. In addition to this, he is dealing with people who have physical and mental impairments – something which is quite new to him. That's an awful lot of new things to take on all at once. And he has really thrown himself into it all.«

Perspectives of cared-for persons

Mutual Give and Take

Reciprocity and give-and-take are essential elements of a voluntary service. International volunteers come with their own ideas and often even with relevant qualifications. In their service locations, they are involved with various kinds of cared-for persons:

They play with children, they do arts and crafts with them, and they tell them stories about their homeland. They support the elderly with everyday tasks, they have time to listen and time for conversation. For people with disabilities, they sometimes offer a unique opportunity to learn a foreign language and to experience another culture first-hand, particularly when volunteers and cared-for persons live and work together.

The people the volunteers work with are usually considered to be the ones needing help, as people who are in need of something, who are takers. However, when they meet international volunteers who need a lot of support at the beginning of their service, they also experience themselves as givers, which leads to more balanced relationships. You will find some impressions of these interactions on the following pages.

mutual impulse



Children, adolescents and pupils

Kindergarten co-worker



At our kindergarten, we experience the international volunteers as bastions of calm in the everyday storm.



»This means a breath of fresh air and new perspectives for our children. New perspectives are helpful for us, especially when we see that they are not yet totally entrenched.«

Teacher at an open all-day school

»Through interactions and discussions, children become aware of the fact that all of us are foreigners, wherever we go.«

Teacher, music school

»The great thing about volunteers is that they have more time to spend with the children than we teachers. During music lessons, we have noticed, that the volunteers were able to teach the children more than we could because they have more time for each individual child.«

Discovering the world

Primary school student (6 years) to a volunteer:

»Are you from Europe? «

Volunteer: »No, from Peru.«

Another pupil: »So from Peru, Europe!?!«

Seniors

An exercise in tolerance

An Incoming-volunteer from Madagascar recounts her meeting with a resident of the catholic nursing home where she works. When she entered the woman's room for the first time to help her with her meal, the woman said: »I won't let you (dark-skinned woman) care for me.«

The volunteer's spontaneous reaction was: »Aren't we all children of God?« From this moment on, the woman gladly accepted help from the young woman from Madagascar.

Resident:

»For me, international volunteers bring a different tone to our everyday life.



There's more laughter, and all of us share stories more openly.



Incoming-volunteers may have questions that we have never asked ourselves. Many of them are also curious to learn something about Germany's history, something that they have not experienced themselves.«

People with disabilities

Encounter and support
everyday life
↓



What is special about international volunteers?

Kevin J., resident of Foundation Living Spaces Ovelgönnener Mühle

»It keeps being surprised about the good language skills the volunteers arrive with. Even if their German isn't that great at first, they learn fast and are eager to learn more.«

Katharina B., lives and works in the social-therapy institution Richthof in Hessen

»The international volunteers ask me for help, ask for a German word, or want to be given a tour of our village,« says Katharina B., who for over 20 years has lived and worked in the social-therapy institution Richthof in Hessen. »That is new for me and a great experience. Otherwise I am usually the one who is seen to be needing help; now it is me who can offer support. We can help each other in areas where we have weaknesses. I think this is very important for global development.«

Katharina B.

»Not only we the cared-for persons need help and understanding, but the Incoming-volunteers too. This is how we support each other.«

Axel B.

»I have learned a lot from the Incoming volunteers about their countries. I could just as easily watch something on TV or on the internet, but conversations are something totally different. Sometimes we also cook together. I love trying the different dishes, even though they are sometimes a bit too spicy.«

What do you give the volunteers?

Katharina B.

»I give them something of our culture, our friendliness. We are people who need help, they are people, who need help especially in their new surroundings, and we all want to make friends.«

Karina J. (Diakovere Annastift):

»We open up to each other.«

»When I become active, I get something in return. I give them me.«

Katharina B.

»It is great, when after the end of their service, I hear from the volunteers. Sometimes they write to us regularly, and some even come back and visit.«

Perspectives of former volunteers

Name: Robin Jessica
Comes from: South Africa
 ● → P17

What do you think about your voluntary service in Germany today?

Looking back, my voluntary service in Germany feels like swimming in a big ocean. In the beginning the water was cold, and there was rain on top of it. The ocean was deep, sometimes too deep. Over time I learned how to swim, many areas became calmer, and the waves subsided. The entire time it was difficult for me to find friends. I learned that I had to be active to find friends. People in Germany did not just approach me, wanting to get to know me. Despite this, the voluntary service was important for me. I have learned a lot and would recommend that all young people do a service abroad.

What was your return like and how were the first months after your service?

When I returned, I didn't know what to do. The first three months were difficult. My friends and family were there for me, but I didn't know what to do with myself. Before starting my voluntary service, I had completed a degree in early childhood education. At some point it became clear to me: with my experience in Germany and my knowledge of the German language, I could apply at a German school. I did just that, and now I work at a German preschool.

Name: Muamar Kadafi
Comes from: Indonesia
 ● → P16

What do you think about your voluntary service in Germany today?

My voluntary service was special. It helped me to have good experiences. You learn a lot, for example about communication, empathy, and sympathy.

What was your return like and how were the first months after your service?

The first days were somewhat strange. After that, everything was back to normal. Unfortunately the children's home, which I supported before my voluntary service in Germany, is temporarily closed because there is not enough money. Right now I work as a private teacher and freelancer to collect money for the re-opening of the children's home.

Name: Juana Botero
Comes from: Colombia
 ● → P22-23

What do you think about your voluntary service in Germany today?

I am grateful that I found the time and had the interest to do this service. In any case I have learned so much and will always treasure these memories.

What was easy and what was difficult during your service?

Easy? I have to laugh. Nothing was easy. Or let me put it this way: the good things weren't easy. It was easy to put on weight; it was easy to make mistakes; it was easy to take the wrong bus. It was easier to arrive than to stay. In any case, it was easier to complain about the cold than to enjoy it. By this I don't mean that it wasn't good, but it was a struggle every day.

What do you miss about Germany?

In Colombia, strangely enough, I missed certain German foods. Not German dishes, but rather the 'hippie'-organic-food that you can buy there. I also missed the honesty. German politeness. Punctuality. Those are the things I learned to value.

What are you doing right now?

After some time in Colombia, I came back to Germany, and in September 2017, I will start a training to become a residential and youth-care worker.

Perspectives of the international partner organisations

International partners are organisations which deal with the application and selection process, preparation and follow-up work, and also give guidance and support to the volunteers from the various different countries of origin. Working in cooperation with German sponsorship organisations, they make it possible for the experience gained during the voluntary work placements to be put in context and used as feedback. In the following section, you will find some points of view from partner organisations.

What are your motives for sending young volunteers to Germany?

On the one hand, we want to give young people the chance to get a unique experience which could change their understanding of life. This period of voluntary service will qualify them for life. On the other hand, we hope that members of German society will learn more about Peruvian culture through the exchange with the volunteers.

—————> **Mónica Ochoa Navarro, Peru**

I send volunteers to Germany to promote inter-cultural exchange and a change in perspectives, as a solution to a wide range of different problems.

—————> **Juma Moshim, Uganda**

We hope that these young people will gather inter-cultural experiences and social skills whilst also learning a new language. The young people can develop and experience many things. They would not get a chance like this by staying in their own countries.

—————> **Rano Okhunova, Tajikistan**

I was a volunteer myself in Germany, and I would like to make it possible for other Brazilians to have this inspiring experience.

—————> **Reinaldo Nascimento, Brazil**

How does the selection and preparation process work in the volunteers' countries of origin?

We tend to select those volunteers in particular who have demonstrated their willingness to learn. An important element of the preparation stage is to learn the language. Their tenacity and stamina during the one-to-one inter-cultural and language preparation sessions is an important indicator for their level of motivation.

—————> **Mónica Ochoa Navarro, Peru**

We especially want our volunteers to have a socially-oriented eye for other people. If they are able to spend a period of time beforehand observing the work, for example, in a retirement home or perhaps a boarding school for children with learning difficulties, this is optimal preparation to make them conscious of what will be awaiting them in Germany.

—————> **Rano Okhunova, Tajikistan**



The volunteers who we choose put a lot of effort and often also a lot of money into spending a period of time observing or sitting in on a similar job beforehand as preparation, and also into learning the language! Many of them travel up to six hours just to find a better German course.

—————> **Reinaldo Nascimento, Brazil**



In your opinion, what is the overall added value of doing an international voluntary placement, in Germany and in their home country?

Participation in an international voluntary service project increases to a considerable extent the options for the volunteers as regards jobs and training positions in their home country. Apart from their foreign language skills, the international experience which they have gained is the key plus point on their return.

—————> **Mónica Ochoa Navarro, Peru**

Some volunteers notice during their placements in Germany that they manage to do things which they could never have imagined doing before. I am always really happy and proud when they come to this realisation along the way. Of course I am always really pleased if they come back and get involved in work in similar establishments. I also notice that many of them realise that there is also a lot to do here in Brazil, that you can get involved in projects here, and that it really isn't that complicated to do so. Some of them develop a socio-political conscience and start to ask questions which they might not have considered before.

—————> **Reinaldo Nascimento, Brazil**

International exchange opens up more opportunities for you to learn about yourself and to develop. The young people have a fantastic chance to strengthen their will and to expand their world view.

—————> **Rano Okhunova, Tajikistan**

What do the returning volunteers bring back with them?

The organisations where the volunteers worked before they went off to do their placements benefit from a great deal of added value. The volunteers compare work processes, and they often come back with encouraging words and report to their colleagues about all the things which can be done.

—————> **Juma Moshim, Uganda**

One of my volunteers in Germany (from a different programme) felt very happy in his placement and made a lot of friends. He extended his placement period by six months, so that he could learn more about looking after people. The young man told me that he already had a lot of ideas on how he could put these experiences to good use in practice whilst also continuing to study for his degree.

—————> **Mónica Ochoa Navarro, Peru**

What further observations have been made regarding incoming volunteer placements?



It is particularly important for the volunteers that they always have the opportunity to contact their sponsors here in Germany. Regular seminars and being reachable on the phone create a feeling of close contact. This makes the volunteers feel happier and safer.

—————> **Reinaldo Nascimento, Brazil**



Many of the placement organisations really like taking on international volunteers because they can learn a lot from them, such as different ways of dealing with people. The volunteers often tell us that they sometimes receive a good deal of attention in the placement organisations. This all leads to stronger international partnerships.

—————> **Juma Moshim, Uganda**

As I stay in touch with the volunteers, I get mostly positive feedback from them. Sometimes difficulties can arise with the volunteer fitting in at the placement organisation. They then get advice and support from the educational staff at the sponsorship organisation, who also give them guidance and support throughout their whole stay in Germany.

—————> **Rano Okhunova, Tajikistan**



The volunteers can serve as role models for other young people in their age group and in their own local environment. They can also help with the preparation of new volunteers.

—————> **Mónica Ochoa Navarro, Peru**



Taking on ›incoming‹ volunteers for a placement

When international volunteers come to Germany to live, work, learn the language and discover a new culture, they need more than a roof over their heads and a bit of pocket money. In the following section, we will give you an idea what it means in practice to take on an international volunteer.

Curiosity

These young people travel with their own personal »rucksack« on their backs. In this rucksack, they carry their lives up to now – their family and friends, their language and hobbies, their skills and expertise, their hopes and dreams, their fears and doubts, and of course their values. Not all of the volunteers unpack their rucksacks straight away, some of them don't want anyone to look inside. Even though knowing what's inside can make living together much easier!

So it's important to show the volunteers – we are interested in you, we would like to find out more about you. It helps of course if you tell them something about yourself too, so that you can build up a trusting relationship with them.

Patience

During the first few days and weeks, the ›incomers‹ have a lot of things to process and will probably also be very tired. The climate, the language, the food, the unfamiliar ways of behaving – all these things can be quite confusing. It can help if you ask them what things are like back at home, what they normally eat, who they meet up with and so on. In particular the shy volunteers will then slowly start to thaw out.

Humour

You should always reckon with misunderstandings. The ›incomers‹ will be standing in the wrong place at the wrong time, have perhaps got mixed up between morning and afternoon, or couldn't find their rooms. That's completely normal! Laughing together about the things that went wrong and then giving a better explanation of the meeting place and time will help things to go better the next time round.

Time

The words come out slowly, the sentence doesn't seem to ever get finished off, and actually you are in a bit of a hurry...being listened to by colleagues and superiors also means a lot to most volunteers. They will feel that you are

taking them seriously and showing them respect. These are two important elements which will give the ›incomers‹ the courage to try out new things and put them into practice. In their lives up to now, they were perhaps in the role of a hard-working student, or of an older brother or sister with a lot of responsibility. Now, with reduced language abilities and in an unfamiliar environment, they sometimes feel as if they can't do anything at all.

In fact, they just need more time – time to make themselves understood, time to understand others. They can then quickly develop into good and responsible helpers.

Learning and having fun

People think and behave differently on account of their differing life experiences. Of course, the ›incomers‹ have to keep to certain rules and cannot be allowed to completely re-organise existing work processes. But there will certainly be things which we can learn from them which will be an enrichment for us if we can do things differently, or at least consider them from a different perspective.

Flexibility

What is the meaning of time, family and friendships; what does home really mean? There are many different perspectives on this. In particular when you are far away from home, things which you previously took for granted and perhaps didn't even really take any notice of can become very important.

›Incomers‹ need feedback and exchange in order to be able to experience themselves in a different way from how they have been seen up to now. And mostly it is not only the volunteers who change, but also the other people in their immediate environment.

Taking on an ›incoming‹ volunteer is a decision which should be made by the whole team, as it will affect the whole team and in fact the whole establishment. ›Incomers‹ are looking for a domain and a home for a year. For this, they are prepared to invest a lot. Placement organisations who decide to take on an ›incoming‹ will have an experienced sponsor organisation supporting them with the selection, preparation and guidance of the volunteer. In difficult situations they can also help to clarify things. The sponsors can get financial assistance, e.g. from the Ministry for Family Affairs. There are grants available for accommodation, meals or for social insurance.



↑
gaining
new perspectives