

National Profile

Germany



2026-2027

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„ICJA Freiwilligenaustausch weltweit leistet durch internationale Begegnungen und interkulturelle Bildung praktische Friedensarbeit und fördert gesellschaftspolitisches Engagement.“

"ICJA volunteer exchange worldwide contributes to practical peace work and supports societal and political involvement through international exchange and intercultural education."

Introduction

Dear future volunteers,

In our National Profile, we would like to give you an impression of the country that you either are thinking about choosing or that you already chose for your exchange year.

We want to provide you with some information on Germany, which you probably did not expect when thinking about coming to our country.

We also want to inform you about the general framework of doing a voluntary service in Germany and let you have a glimpse into what might be waiting for you here in Germany.

We want to make you curious about coming here and making your own experiences, and we are looking forward to sharing them with you!

Reading through this information you will probably notice that we do not go deeply into each topic, but rather try to touch different aspects and provide you with links and references so that you will be able to pursue the issues that you are personally especially interested in.

We hope you enjoy reading through this National Profile and we are looking forward to welcome you and answer all your remaining questions after we have picked you up at the airport in Germany!

See you soon!

The ICJA team

Geography



The Federal Republic of Germany is located right in the centre of Europe. Its neighbours are numerous: Denmark in the North, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg and France in the West, Austria and Switzerland in the South as well as Poland and the Czech Republic in the East.

With your visa for Germany, you can visit all of these countries without having to apply for another visa. They are all part of the Schengen Agreement that abolished border controls between the participating states, which are most of the EU member states and some other countries such as Norway and Switzerland, while at the same time strengthening police cooperation between the participating states.

Link with more detailed information:

<https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/aamt/zugastimaa/buergerservice/faq/17-schengenstaaten/606722>

Climate

One thing can be said about the German climate: it is never boring! The weather changes with the seasons and at its extremes, the temperature can vary between 35 degrees Celsius in August to minus 15 degrees in January.

However, in general the meteorologists who classify the German climate as temperate are right: the weather tends to be slightly chilly and rainy for much of the year. For roughly six months, it is cold, for around two months, it is warm, and the rest of the time, particularly in April, the weather is very unpredictable.

If you come from a climate zone where the weather is mostly the same all-year round, the seasons in Germany can catch you by surprise!



German Society and Culture

The German Language

Today, German is the native language of more than 130 million people. About one in ten books published throughout the world is written in German. However, the German language sounds different in different regions. Dialects, pronunciations and even words can differ greatly: If, for example, a person from Saxony and a native Bavarian were to carry on a conversation in their respective pure dialects, they would certainly have some difficulties understanding each other! For you, this means that the German you will hear in your host family or your project might not be the exact kind of German you learn in your language classes. But do not worry too much: even though they might speak a dialect at home, almost all Germans also speak the *Hochdeutsch* that you hear on the evening news.

Facts and Figures about Germany	
Inhabitants (2025)	83,5 M
Language	German
Capital	Berlin
Currency	Euro (€)
Share of Foreigners	14,1 M
Population with migrant background	22,1 M
Statistisches Bundesamt, 2025	

Churches/Religion

Germany is a secular state. Nevertheless, about 46 Million of Germany's 83 million inhabitants belong to one of the Christian churches. Of these, roughly half are Protestants, and half are Roman Catholics, while a minority belongs to other Christian denominations. Generally, church membership has decreased in the last decades, and roughly one third of Germans would describe themselves as being unaffiliated with any religion. Due to historical developments, the prevalence of the **major Christian denominations** shows a regional trend: the South-Western part of Germany (Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg) is predominantly Catholic, while the Northern and the Eastern part of Germany are Protestant. The Catholic and the Protestant church in Germany work closely together in the ecumenical church movement. However, despite membership numbers, church and religion in general play a rather marginal part in everyday life, as only a small part of all church members are actively involved in their church. Regular participation in services is not very common, and for many families, going to Christmas mess is the only church service they attend all year. However, you might also experience that some families keep the tradition of saying a short prayer before dinner.

Besides Christian churches of all denominations, you might also come across Jewish synagogues, Buddhist and Hindu temples and Muslim mosques in German cities, as there are people with numerous confessional backgrounds living in Germany. The two major ones are people of **Muslim faith** (about 4.5 million) and of **Jewish faith** (about 94.000, in 1945: 15.000). Similarly to Christian churches, Muslim as well as Jewish communities in Germany represent all forms of religious identity, from orthodox to progressive.

Muslim communities, however, are the focus of a decades-old political conflict. Since the migration of Muslim workers in the 1960s and 1970s, their place in German society has been contested by conservative as well as right-wing groups. Clearly showing the ongoing tensions,

the building of mosques regularly leads to protests. Particularly the linked right-wing populist groups Pro NRW and Pro Deutschland agitate against German Muslims, provoking violent clashes between extremists on both sides.

Volunteering

Being a volunteer is well-known concept in German society. In 2019, 28.8 million people are engaged in voluntary work in Germany, representing 39.7 per cent of the country's population aged 14 and above. This rate of volunteering had remained steady between 2014 and 2019. Helping out in sports clubs, supervising a childrens' play group or sitting on local church committees are some of the most widespread activities. Volunteers are irreplaceable for the social sector in Germany. This is not unproblematic, as this means that projects and programmes related to public welfare and social services now depend on people willing to work free, with the state having withdrawn from areas that formerly were its responsibility.

It is possible that many people you will meet know somebody who is a volunteer. However, your willingness to work for free in a project might also be understood as something completely ordinary, and you might not feel as appreciated as you thought.

Links and Literature:

Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens , Women and Youth
Volunteering in Germany Key Findings of the Fifth German Survey on Volunteering (FWS 2019)
Link: [Volunteering in Germany](#)

Some Highlights of German culture(s)

On **St Martin**, which is November 11th, children meet in the evening with self-made paper lanterns and walk through the streets, singing St Martin's songs. In some regions, there is also a public bonfire on St Martin's eve, and particular foods: St Martin's goose, pastries called *Martinshörnchen*, shaped like croissants or like gingerbread men.

On **Nikolaus**, celebrated on December 6th (St. Nikolaus), children traditionally find chocolates, walnuts, gingerbread and tangerines in their shoes, which are said to be gifts from St Nikolaus. There are also a lot of regional traditions linked to Nikolaus. In many parts of Germany, children dress up in costumes on the eve of December 6th, and ring doorbells asking for sweets, similarly to the American Halloween. In some regions of Germany, the figure of St Nikolaus is traditionally accompanied by Knecht Ruprecht. In many Southern regions such as Bavaria, St Nikolaus is accompanied by one or more dark, devil-like figures known as Krampus, who try to terrify children with their masks and noises; in some regions, the *Krampusse* (a group of people in terrifying masks and costumes) race through the villages on December 5th.



German Christmas is celebrated on December 24th, usually in the circle of your closest family. Traditions again are regionally different and might also depend on the respective family's personal traditions, but generally, families have a Christmas tree in their living room, and after Christmas dinner, the family gives each other presents. On December 25th, families often meet with members of the extended family at lunchtime to eat a Christmas goose.

New Year's Eve, or **Silvester**, is celebrated on December 31st, with huge firework displays at midnight. This is also the only day of the year when starting private fireworks is legally allowed. Silvester in Germany is noisy and colorful, and for young people, often a night they spend at private parties with friends. If you are outside at midnight to watch the fireworks displays, please note that sometimes people start fireworks in the middle of crowds or throw small fireworks at cars or other people.

Public holidays

On public holidays, schools, shops and workplaces are closed. Emergency services are operating, as are shops in train stations as well as in gas stations.

The number of public holidays depends on the federal state you will be living in; in general, there are more public holidays in the South than in the North, due to a number of Catholic public holidays.

Link for more details: [Public holidays in Germany - Wikipedia](#)

Also known as *Fastnacht*, *Fasnet*, *Fasching* or *Fünfte Jahreszeit*/Fifth Season, **carnival celebrations** take place sometime in February to March. The exact dates depend on when Easter takes place, and is counted back from Ash Wednesday, called *Aschermittwoch* in German.



In protestant regions in Germany, carnival is not an important tradition, while particularly in the West and in the South West of Germany (in dominantly catholic regions), carnival is a huge part of local culture and connected with many specific traditions. In those carnival celebrations, particularly in the carnival celebrations in Köln, Düsseldorf, and Mainz one important aim is to laugh and make fun about political authorities.

In the South West the "*Fasnet*" or "*Fastnacht*" in addition to this aim has its roots in more medieval traditions which symbolize the expulsion of the winter by witches, demons and spring spirits (represented in the costumes people are wearing – In the South west, each village has its own "masks").

During carnival, there are public parades taking place in many city centers. And of course, it is always a big party which can take a whole week!



If you are interested in the many varieties of Carnival celebrations, check out these Wikipedia articles, which give a good overview over the different regional celebrations:

In general: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carnival_in_Germany,_Switzerland_and_Austria

Cologne: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cologne_Carnival

Mainz: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mainz_carnival

South West Germany https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schw%C3%A4bisch-alemannische_Fastnacht

May 1st is a public holiday everywhere in Germany (*Tag der Arbeit*/ Labour Day). Traditionally, trade unions organize demonstrations and events, and shops are closed.

German food

Compared to the French or Italians, Germans are not typically known for their love of good cuisine. According to statistics, Germans only spend around 11% of their income on consumer goods such as food, while the Italians for example spend around 14% (Eurostat 2012). This is reflected in how many discount food stores such as ALDI, Lidl and Penny and how many *Imbissbuden*/fast-food counters you will find in any town in Germany. *Currywurst mit Pommes rot-weiß* (*Currywurst* with French fries, with ketchup and mayonnaise), *Döner Kebab* and hamburger seem to be consumed in large numbers.

However, this is only half of the picture. For many German families, eating together is really important. Sharing meals and sitting at one table while eating is a way for family members to connect and communicate before or after a busy day. As host son or host daughter, they will expect you to sit down at the table with the family and eat with them (and help with cleaning the table after the meal). Even if you might not understand all that is said in the beginning, just spending time with your host family in this setting will help you to get to know them and become part of the family. Don't underestimate the importance of participating in German family meals! And the significance of sharing food is not only limited to the family setting. In the work context, for example, a barbeque in summer and a Christmas party with *Lebkuchen* and *Stollen* in December are an important part of work culture.



reading a Sunday newspaper over breakfast.

German foods as such might be slightly unusual and possibly uncomfortable heavy for you. Traditionally, **breakfast consists of bread rolls (*Brötchen*) or bread, eaten with different kinds of cheese, meat and jams**. While in some families, this tradition continues, others only eat some cereal or have just a coffee on weekdays. However, Sunday breakfast still tends to be an elaborate spread of *Brötchen*, eggs, cheeses and jams, and many like to spend one or two hours

Generally speaking, potatoes and bread are staples of the German diet. **Hot meals usually consist of meat or fish with potatoes, pasta or rice, and also some vegetables and often are served only once a day**. Foreign cuisine is also well-liked, particularly Italian dishes and Chinese. However, it is not unusual to eat cold dishes - particularly bread with cheese or *Wurst* - in the evening instead of a hot meal ("*Brotzeit*"). German bread is whole-grain, often bought in bakeries, and exists in many variations with many different kinds of grains and ingredients.

There is an increasing number of people in Germany who choose a vegetarian or vegan diet due different reasons. This last is widely accepted in society and supermarkets, restaurants and cafeterias now offer a variety of products and meals to satisfy the increasing demand. It is possible that your host family follows a vegetarian or vegan way of cooking and eating and would be part of the cultural exchange, to adapt to it.

Facts about ICJA/ICYE Germany

The ICYE National Committee in Germany is called “**ICJA Freiwilligenaustausch weltweit**” (ICJA volunteer exchange worldwide). In 1949, ICJA Germany and a partner organization in the United States founded a bilateral youth exchange program with the intention of facilitating reconciliation after the Second World War, motivated by a Christian sense of responsibility and service for humanity. This exchange program was the foundation of what today is the worldwide ICYE federation, with National Committees all around the globe that have agreed on quality standards and rules regarding the program, and that work together in sending and receiving international volunteers.

The Office

The administrative work of ICJA Germany is coordinated by the ICJA office (*Bundesgeschäftsstelle*) that is located in Berlin. The office selects and prepares the German volunteers who go abroad, is responsible for the international volunteers in Germany and keeps in contact with other ICYE committees and the International Office of the ICYE federation, which is also located in Berlin. Every year, ICJA sends around 250 German volunteers abroad and welcomes about 50 international incoming volunteers (including all programs and arrivals).

The ICJA Incoming department (**Aufnahme**) is responsible for the organizational context of your exchange year: the Incoming staff search for host families and projects, work with the ICJA regional groups and organize most of your seminars.

You have to be aware of the fact that you might live very far away from the ICJA office in Berlin or the city where the other coordinators live. This means that you will not be in face-to-face contact with them on a daily basis. Therefore, being a volunteer in Germany requires independence and asks for your own initiative to pick up the phone and call the ICJA office in case of difficulties and questions.

ICJA: a Non-Profit Association

ICJA is a non-profit organization, and therefore all revenues and grants are spent in order to operate the exchange programs. Its internal structure is that of a membership association. The ICJA office in Berlin and its staff members are only a small part of a Germany-wide network of members and regional volunteer structures.

Without the commitment and work of its members, ICJA would not exist. They are voluntarily active without getting financial remuneration in all organs and structures of the association: they make policy decisions in committee meetings, represent ICJA at publicity events, and help at seminars. For the Incoming volunteers, the Regional Groups - regionally organized groups of former German volunteers - are particularly relevant.

Regional Groups

There are Regional Groups spread over Germany. Most of the members are former volunteers who are studying or working and work for ICJA in their spare time. Their main task is providing a support network for international volunteers in Germany. They visit host families before your arrival, and organize regional meetings for the international volunteers living in the area in more or less regular intervals. At these regional meetings, you spend time with the German and international volunteers, make excursions, bake cakes, go ice skating, and in general have fun and also the opportunity to share troubles or high points with your fellow international volunteers. All expenses of the meeting, including travel costs, are covered by ICJA.



Ideally every one of you will have her/his personal contact person (**Mentor**) in her/his Regional Group. Their task and obligation is to stay in touch with you and support you during your time in Germany. They also are in contact with your host family and project. Most of the Mentors have been volunteers abroad themselves, so they usually do have an idea of what you are experiencing and can offer advice and support. Sometimes your mentor might need a push from you because maybe he/she has exams to pass at university or is busy with his/her own life. So PLEASE don't be shy to get into contact and write an email to him/her yourself. However, the first personal meeting between you and your mentor should be within the first month of your stay. You will get more information and the name and contact details of your contact person during the On-Arrival camp in Germany, or within the first weeks of your stay. **Unfortunately, in some regions our voluntarily working Regional Groups are not always able to find mentors for all of our volunteers.**

Life as a volunteer

In general, coming to a foreign country as a volunteer means facing unknown situations and customs. Especially during the first months there will be times that you will feel lonely and insecure and wish to be back home in familiar surroundings. All this is normal and part of adapting to a new culture. The best is not to constantly compare between home and Germany and try to find what you have left behind, but to encounter your new surrounding open hearted and curiously.

Most people think about Germany as **urban and industrial areas** and this might be a reason why many volunteers ask to be placed in a city. However, surprisingly for many, Germany consists to a large part of small towns, villages and remote rural areas, and accordingly, **most of the ICJA host families and host projects are in the countryside**. Prepare yourself for a placement in a small town or even a village! That can mean that the public transport connections are slow, with buses only leaving a few times a day. Using a bicycle often is a real alternative way of transportation. This might be, for many of you, an unexpected and new situation. Many times it is easier to become part of the local community in a small town than in a big city, which is much more anonymous.

Living in a host family

Living in a German host family is a good way to get to know the "German way of life". The host families offer to take in an international volunteer in the ICYE program since they are curious about other cultures, and in many cases, because their own son or daughter currently is or was abroad with ICYE. **They do not receive any financial contribution for hosting you!**

Being a host son or host daughter means that you should take part in family life just as any other member of the family with all the rights and duties this implies. You should not behave like a paying guest. The family doesn't want to be used as a hotel where the volunteer is only interested in eating and sleeping. Integrating into a yet unknown family might seem daunting to you. The following tips might offer some guidelines:

Try to spend time with your host family, taking part in their shared activities. Most German families share their evening dinner, and have some shared hobbies, for example walking, cycling, gardening or doing sports. Even if you might not be able to communicate easily in the beginning, showing an interest in getting to know your host family will certainly be appreciated by them.



Be prepared and willing to help with household chores – regardless if you are male or female. Most German families do not have maids or any other household staff. Generally, it is expected of children to assist with duties such as doing the dishes, washing clothing or cleaning; as host son or host daughter, you should also contribute to daily housework. Offer to do the dishes after dinner or help with hanging up laundry – showing that you are willing to help will have a positive effect on your relationship with your host family. And, very important, it certainly is your responsibility to keep your room clean by changing your bed linens regularly, vacuuming the floors and taking out the trash from your room. There is no faster way to ruin your relationship with your host family than expecting your host family to constantly clean up after you!

Living in a work placement (host project)

The other possibility is to **live at the project site**, e.g. in a nursing home where you live in the compound of the project or share a flat with other (German or/and international) volunteers working at the same place.

At the moment, about one third of the volunteers are placed in host projects.

Living at the project site offers you a more independent living situation than staying with a host family. In most cases it gives you the chance to get into close contact with the other volunteers of the institution so you will learn about Germany and its culture mainly in the working process and from the German volunteers.

Living in a residential project also demands a lot of independence from your side. It means doing your own shopping and cooking, washing your clothes by yourself and generally to take care of your needs yourself. Most of the projects where you live and work at the same time have already experience with volunteers from the ICJA programme but still you will need a high degree of personal responsibility. Some projects from ICJA are in remote areas. You need to be aware that you will mostly be socially involved with the other project colleagues and volunteers.

Living in a shared flat with other volunteers

In this case, groups of 3 to 7 volunteers live together in a shared accommodation and this requires a high level of responsibility and independence.

While participants receive the support from ICJA and the regional groups with the regional coordinator, day-to-day life requires a high level of self-organization and personal responsibility.

This option is relatively new and has been gradually introduced since 2023-2024 programme year. Volunteers should be prepared to live with non German people so that they must build their circles and relationships and cope with independence.

IMPORTANT

If you have certain preferences regarding your host family or work placement, please inform us in your application form. We will take them into consideration. **However, we cannot promise to fulfil your wish to live explicitly in a host family of host project.** This depends

on many factors and at the end if we have enough host projects or enough host families available!

Your voluntary work during the exchange year

The idea of the ICYE exchange program is to explore another culture by living an everyday life. **A fundamental part of your everyday life will be working in a project, with regular hours and responsibilities** towards your project. You should not expect just to work when you feel like it. Your project expects you to be interested in the work, and they rely on you.

You might work in a kindergarten, in a youth centre, in a school or in a home for people with disabilities and elderly people, sometimes also in a youth hostel or a project working with displaced people. This work is not paid with a salary, as you are a volunteer, but you will get a pocket money.

Please be aware that you cannot apply for a specific project. ICJA will try to take your preferences regarding certain types of projects (such as work with children, work with young people or displaced people etc) into account. Nevertheless we cannot guarantee, to find you a project of your first priority. As the experience of many volunteers has shown, it is often unexpected situations in life that teach you most about yourself and what you can do.

Also, your visa is linked to your volunteer status. This means that as a participant you are not allowed to work a regular job or earn a salary, or you will lose your residency permit.

For further information on types of projects, please read our ICJA Germany Work Profile 2021/2022. You will find project examples and further information about living in a residential project which will help you to prepare.

Please also read carefully our Rules and Regulations form on the last pages which shows you the guidelines of our program.



Support from the ICJA office

You will get a contact person in the ICJA office, who you can contact when you need support. The ICJA office also organizes three seminars, offers advice regarding insurance, visa issues and any other administrative questions connected to your year in Germany.

If you have questions concerning family life or your project, please contact your regional group / mentor first. They are trained to support you and will in most cases be able to help you. If not, contact your coordinator at the office.

What is expected of you

Be reliable and act responsibly towards your work in the project. This means, for example: arrive on time for work, let your project know if you are sick and cannot come to work, and arrange your holiday times with your project as early as possible.

Have an open mind regarding your host family or host project placement. **It is very likely that you will live in a small town or village, and not a big city.**

Be prepared to become active on your own: it lies in your actions and your dedication to determine how quickly you will learn German and if you will meet people and make friends in Germany

Daily life approximated Prices:

To give you a general idea of what things cost in Germany, please have a look at the list of approximate prices below:

Cup of coffee	2-5 Euro
Milk (1 l)	1,30 Euro
Apples (1 kilo)	3,50 Euro
Beer in a pub	4,50 -6,50 Euro
Paperback book	10 Euro
Pack of cigarettes	8 Euro
One Way Bus/Train Ticket	3,20 – 4,50 Euro
Train ticket Berlin-Frankfurt (no discount)	140 Euro
Prepaid chip card for mobile phones	10,00 – 25,00 Euros

You will receive 302 Euro/month as pocket money which includes the support for the monthly transport. **This is in no way comparable to a salary and will not be enough for travelling and any extra expenses.**

Before your departure to Germany, arrange sufficient funds to keep you financially stable during your year without relying on your volunteer's pocket money!

Preparation

Vaccinations and health

There is no obligation for vaccination in Germany except of those that work with children who must have the one against **Measles**. For this last is that we require all the volunteers, regardless their placement to show a proof of that vaccine.

The German government publishes recommendations for vaccination, you can check on this homepage:

https://www.rki.de/EN/Content/infections/Vaccination/Vaccination_node.html

Following you find some vaccinations we would like to recommend you to get **before your arrival in Germany** - regarding your host project and the corresponding tasks you'll have:

- If you work in projects with **children, for example kindergartens, children daycare centers or schools** we recommend you vaccination for:
 - Pertussis (Bordetella Pertussis)
 - Rubeola, mumps, rubella
 - Varicella zoster infection

- If you work in projects which take **medical care of people, for example elderly homes and homes for handicapped people**, you are recommended to get vaccinations for:
 - Pertussis (Bordetella Pertussis)
 - Hepatitis A virus infection, Rubeola, mumps, rubella

- If your project is situated **mostly outside in the forest, parks and nature and you will have contact with animals**, we strongly recommend you to get vaccinations for:
 - Borrelia burgdorferi (lyme disease mostly caused through ticks)
 - Tick-borne encephalitis

Please check your medical health certificate for your history of vaccinations and if necessary make some follow ups taking the list above into consideration.

In case you are insecure about your project description, whether or not to get vaccinated, please contact the contact person(s) at your future host project as soon as you have their contact. They will be happy to hear from you and can tell you best, which vaccination you should get.

Please note that the health insurance which is part of your ICYE programme will **NOT cover any upcoming vaccination costs**. Anyhow, **in some cases, the work placement of the volunteer requires a certain vaccination**. In this case, either the project or the volunteer has to cover the costs for the vaccination.

Although HIV/AIDS is not extremely widespread in Germany, there is an increasing rate of people who are HIV positive, which is due to a decreasing public awareness. As in every country, there is also the danger of other sexually transmitted infections like hepatitis. **The usage of condoms therefore is strongly recommended!**

Police Check

In Germany, most projects working with vulnerable people (children, people with disabilities etc.) require to bring an official statement from the police, which shows that they have not been prosecuted for any crimes (known as police check or *Polizeiliches Führungszeugnis*). Therefore, ICJA asks their volunteers to bring such a police statement with them to Germany.

What to bring on the arrival

- Warm clothes and shoes suitable to rainy and cold weather
- Small gifts for your host family/tutor in your project
- Things typical for your home country (for Country

- Presentation at the On Arrival-camp)
- Important documents:
 - Your passport
 - Your visa and visa invitation letter
 - Health certificate
 - Police check
 - International Driver's Licence/Driver's License
 - Return airline ticket

Make sure that you can carry your luggage by yourself!

Travelling from the airport to the On-Arrival Camp and then to your hosting situation will involve some walking, and possibly some stairs at train stations, and nobody is going to carry your luggage for you.

We recommend one suitcase or backpack and hand luggage.

Final Remarks

The beginning of your exchange year will be a lot easier if you have already started to learn the language before coming to Germany. This will help you to build up contacts to people and to adapt to life in Germany faster. And in particular, if you expect to do any interesting tasks in your project, speaking German is an absolute necessity! Therefore, start learning the language as early as possible!

If you make an effort, even though your grammar or pronunciation might not be perfect - people will recognize that you want to communicate with them and they will be more open to listening to you. However, do not expect to learn perfect German in one year, even though some of the volunteers achieve a high fluency in German.

Contact with home

Everybody involved in ICJA knows how it feels to be a volunteer. Everybody has experienced the feeling of homesickness and loneliness.

Nevertheless we suggest you to try **not to keep too intensive contact with home throughout the year because this might hinder your ability to get truly familiar with your new surroundings.** We generally do not encourage travelling to your home country during your exchange year (except in case of emergency, illness or death of a relative). We also advise all volunteers not to receive visits from friends and relatives from home. If so it is better at the end of the year. Also, it is not allowed to receive visitors during the obligatory ICYE seminars. If you're planning to have such visitors, please ask your host family beforehand and seek clarification about which time (when and how long) it would be possible for them to receive extra visitors. If you want to take vacation days while your friends or family visit, or go travelling, it is really important that you speak with your project and your host family as early in advance as possible. If you work in a school or another kind of project with fixed (school) holidays, you might need to take your vacation time during these official closures time. We recommend talking with your tutor in the project about this at the beginning of your voluntary year.

Return

The program of ICYE generally is a one year exchange program. Please be prepared to stay here for the full 12 months.

We hope we could make you curious or even excited about an exchange year in Germany!

Annex I: Visa Procedure

Technically all volunteers from Non-European Union countries must apply for a visa before coming to Germany. If you have the nationality of a European Union member country, you can enter Germany without a visa. Volunteers from Japan, Israel, the USA and South Korea can enter Germany without a visa but must apply for permission to stay at their regional immigration office within the first week in Germany.

For volunteers from all other countries: It is not possible to enter with a tourist visa and then get a regular visa once you are here. If you don't have a regular visa, the officials at the airport might refuse your entry.

How to get your Visa

When your voluntary year in Germany is confirmed by ICYE, you will receive an invitation letter from ICJA Germany and a contract with your project and some other documents.

Please get in contact with your sending organization to have more information about the application process as it might take months. The specific procedure as well as the time it takes depend on the policy of the German Embassy in your country; please check their website and ask your National Committee for details.

Note: ICJA sent information about the Visa procedure to every sending committee and this will be useful. Please read it completely and in case of questions contact them.

Annex II: Rules and Regulations

The success of your exchange year will depend very much on you and your attitude. Like any program, there are limitations, rules and regulations which have been established to enable us to accomplish the goals of the ICYE program together. Please read the following rules carefully and then return the signed agreement.

To: Volunteer to Germany	Name:
From: ICYE Germany - ICJA	Home country:

1. I have read and understood the guidelines for incoming volunteer in the National Profile of ICYE Germany and also the Federation's Guide for volunteers and I agree to follow them.
2. I will learn the language of my host country. I will participate in the language course offered in advance if necessary.
3. I am prepared to adapt to the lifestyle of my host family/host situation.
4. I am prepared to accept whatever assignment my host committee prepares for me.
I am aware that I may be placed in a small village. Refusal of placements will not be tolerated.
5. Change of placements will not be made during the first three months except in cases where the volunteer's well-being is threatened.
6. When changing host situation, ICYE will work with the volunteer to find a suitable new placement. The volunteer must be prepared to accept the new host situation found by ICYE Germany.
7. I will attend all obligatory ICJA seminars: the orientation, mid-term and final evaluation camp (and if applicable BFD/ww Seminar).
8. The ICYE-program is a volunteer program. I am prepared to work up to 39 hours a week in a voluntary work placement. Agreements made between the volunteer and the place of work must be followed.
9. The ICJA program contains voluntary work within the ICYE Germany program. I know that it is absolutely forbidden to work in order to earn money: This is **illegal!!!**
10. I am aware that the pocket money I receive for voluntary work only covers the daily additional expenses (as stated in the National Profile of ICYE Germany).
11. I understand that ICYE is not a travel agency and that the main purpose of my exchange year is to do my volunteer service. If I travel to another country outside Germany I have to inform ICJA beforehand.
12. I will obey the laws of my host country, Germany.
13. I will not use any illegal substance or drugs during my exchange year.
14. I will return to my home country at the end of the exchange year.
15. Marriage during the exchange year is prohibited.

I hereby confirm that I have read and understood the above rules.

I also confirm that I have been informed of the fact that my medical insurance and my liability insurance will expire when my exchange year ends and that from that time ICYE Germany has no further obligations towards me.

I am aware that not following the above mentioned rules and regulations will lead to the expulsion from the program and the return to my home country.

Date

Signature of volunteer

Signature of parents (if volunteer is under 18)

Annex III: Motivation and Reflection Letter

Your name and age: _____

Your country of residence: _____

Motivation and Reflection Letter

Please send us a typed letter of 1-1.5 pages regarding the following aspects:

1. Please describe four aspects of your personal motivation to do a voluntary service.
(Please try to avoid stereotypes like "I want to help...")
2. Please explain why you want to do it in Germany.
3. Please tell us in short about your mental picture/ your expectations concerning life in a host family/host project in Germany (depending on your preferences).
Be aware that Germany does not only consist of big cities but also of small villages and remote areas.
4. In which field would you like to do your voluntary service and why?
 - a. Do you have any work or volunteer experience in this field?
 - b. What do you expect to learn?
 - c. Regarding which aspects could the project benefit from you?
5. Which field of voluntary work would you reject or can't imagine and why?
6. How does the voluntary service fit into your current life?
 - a. In which way will the experience during your exchange year contribute to your future plans?
7. Please tell us briefly about your use of internet. How would it be for you, not to use internet and/or WhatsApp every day?

Annex IV: Motivation Letter for the embassy

Address of the German Embassy

your name

Visa department

Your address

Motivation letter

The embassy requires a motivation letter as part of the documents to obtain a Visa.

***Please note that the Motivation Letter for the embassy must be a different one than for the ICYE in the application process and you don't have to send this to us! This is only a short a guide that might help you to elaborate it.**

1. Please explain why you want to do a voluntary service in Germany.
2. Explain how this year of volunteering fits in your curriculum.
3. How does the voluntary service fit into your current life?
4. Explain in which kind of project you will work (see the project description of you work placement). If you have not got any, please write down, what you would like to do and change the part as soon as you get your placement description.
5. Describe what you think you could contribute to German society with your volunteer work.
6. Describe what you want to do when you come back to your home country and how you want to use/ transfer your experiences from Germany in your country.
What do you expect, how can the experience of your volunteer year be helpful for your future plans?

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