



# Work Profile

# Germany



2024-2025

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## Dear future volunteer,

In this Work Profile we would like to present some of the voluntary work placements that ICJA offers. The aim is to give you an idea about what kind of voluntary work we potentially offer here in Germany.

Thinking about your exchange year, you will probably ask yourself two main questions: **Where will I live? What kind of work will I be doing?** In this booklet, we try to give you as much information about these two main questions as possible, in order to help you to get a realistic idea about the possibilities and limits of this programme.

*Important Note: Even when the voluntary service abroad is considered as formation and informal education, this is not the same as professional practice and for that this should not be seen as that.*

In **Chapter One** you will get all the general information about the meaning of voluntary work as it is offered within the ICJA programme.

By quoting former volunteers we try to give you an impression. You will see that similar circumstances can be fun for one and unpleasant for another person and that the outcome also depends on yourself.

**Chapter Two** describes the differences between living in a host family and living in the project where you will work.

In **Chapter Three**, we will inform you about the kind of projects we usually offer when you stay with a host family. You will find some project examples and statements made by former volunteers. **Since we have mostly new host families in different places every year, we must look always for new projects located in the area where the families live.** This means that the **projects presented in the chapter ARE ONLY EXAMPLES** for you, so that you can obtain an impression. **You cannot apply for one of the presented projects in particular.** But you receive an idea about what you can expect in general from the kind of projects you might be working in when you stay with a host family.

The residential projects are presented in **Chapter Four**. We will describe some projects that regularly take ICJA volunteers and include statements from former volunteers.

**Please be aware that we cannot guarantee you a placement in a specific project or town. Nevertheless, you can be sure that we try our best to find the most suitable placement for you.**

In **Chapter Five** we will explain what kind of information we need from you in order to find an appropriate project. A summary of the general rights and obligations of volunteers in Germany within the ICJA programme is given in **Chapter Six**.

In **Chapter Seven** we are asking for your personal interests concerning the voluntary work and host situation. This is part of your application form and we need detailed information in order to find a placement for you that meets your interests.

## **Important Information**

- **Please know that you do not choose the project, but the project chooses you! We take into account your interests, priorities and skills in order to direct your profile to the best project available and we work hard on that. For this last, it is important that you write a good candidate's application.**
- **The Covid19 Pandemic, the war in Ukraine and the conflict between Israel and Palestine affected Germany; the placement of volunteers is facing even more complications. For this last, we expect our future volunteers to be more open towards this process and the outcome of it.**
- **The knowledge of the German language at last at a basic level is a MUST at all projects. This requirement has changed of the last years to the high number of volunteer applications the projects receive from many different organizations (the projects can allow themselves to be more selective than before).**
- Due to the current emergence of refugees towards Germany, civil society is taking on an important part in giving shelter to many displaced persons and refugees. Some residential projects, ICJA works with, are taking in families and young adults who had to leave their country.

Working with displaced persons and refugees is a very important service to society but it needs empathy and openness towards their personal stories which are affected by war and displacement. If you are interested to work in these projects please let us know. If you cannot imagine working in this type of project you can note it in your list of priorities and we will respect your wish.

**IMPORTANT NOTE: If you are interested in working in this field, you should have a proficient level of the German language (at least B1). On the other hand, you will most likely not speak much German but English plus any other kind of verbal and nonverbal communication with the refugees themselves.**

- Since January 2010, every volunteer who wants to work in a project related to children, like kindergartens, schools or youth centres/ youth organisations, needs a "certificate of good conduct"/police check. This was a decision made by the Federal Republic of Germany to decrease the risks of child abuse in German institutions.
- Also, if you want to drive a car during your stay in Germany it would be much easier and cheaper if you apply for an international-drivers-license in your home country already.

# 1 Voluntary work: What does that mean?

*"When I started to volunteer in Germany, I thought I had to give something to disabled people. My thinking was wrong. Volunteering was not giving something to them but getting something from them. It was the most important experience that I had. "(Hye from South Korea, 08/09)*

You made the decision to apply for a programme that offers voluntary service abroad, possible because you realized that sharing everyday life with German people and working together every day is the best way to fully immerse yourself in a new culture. This type of programme also means that **the focus of your time in Germany will be to work in your project.**

Voluntary work within' ICYE Germany usually means working in a social field. The work is voluntary, thus you will only receive pocket money for your daily expenses. **You cannot expect to save up money during your exchange year for your travel month or even to take some home with you!** Be aware that paid jobs along the way are not allowed. This is not the aim of the programme it is not covered by your visa and it is illegal.

In any kind of voluntary work placement, the most important aim is the social and intercultural learning. Sharing everyday life in another culture is the best way to get an understanding of it. You should be prepared to take over a certain amount of responsibility and work together with your co-workers. **We cannot promote personal careers by offering special studies or certified professional training or university studies. We cannot guarantee a placement in a specific project type as our programme is not thought to be a professional career booster but to have a unique social and intercultural experience.**

**When you start working, you will need knowledge of German.** The more you know, the more interesting your work will be. **This has also an important impact in the placement in projects!** Therefore, we need you to start to learn German in your home country and benefit as much as you can during your stay here.

**IMPORTANT:** It is expected that the volunteer speaks a **communicative level of English** as every information, such as seminars and communication with the office will be in English in the beginning. Additionally, volunteers with low or any knowledge of English are difficult to be placed and they tend to have problems since the very beginning of the exchange in every aspect. Please have this in mind. **If you do not know well neither German, nor English – please start learning German immediately.**

*"In the beginning I thought Germans do not have any sense of humour at all because my host parents never laughed. When I understood the German language better, I learnt that they do have a sense of humour indeed, they did make funny jokes, but without laughing about them."* (Jessica from Switzerland, 2010)

## **2 Where to live?**

**Generally, there are two different kinds of host situations:**

### **1. In a Host Family**

One type of host situation could be staying with a **host family** (mother and father with children, single mother with children, single father with children, couples without children or even a single person). You would then do voluntary work in a project in the village/ town/ city where you live. ICJA will organise the project for you before you come to Germany. Be aware that most German families do not have a lot of children, and sometimes the children are already grown-up and live on their own. In many cases, there are only the host parents and maybe one host brother or sister. Due this last, it is expected that the volunteers show a certain level of independence.

**IMPORTANT: Due the current reality in Germany, it is less probable to obtain a host family and the probabilities of being placed in one turned lower.**

To give you an impression of what it is like to live in a host family, we pass on to you what former volunteers told us about their experience:

*"During the 11 months I lived with my family, I had a mum, a father and a brother, it was not easy to accept each other and to get used to the idea of living together for almost one year. My conclusion is that the most difficult part was the difference of cultures, but at the same time I reached my goal, and it was to experience the CULTURAL EXCHANGE. I will take with me nice memories, people that will always be in my heart like the mother and the grandmother, two incredible people, happy patient, kind, nice, I really will miss these 2 persons."* (Tatiana from Bolivia, 08/09)

## 2. Residential Projects

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 with other (German or/and international) volunteers. At the moment, about the half of the volunteers are placed in these living situations. **This means that all volunteers who are 21 years and older should be prepared to live in a project or an apartment shared with other volunteers.**

Living at the project site offers you a more independent living situation than staying with a host family. 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. Also, in some projects, internet connection is limited. In this case you can buy a phone card with mobile internet. ICJA does not cover the costs for private internet usage.

### **Here's what former volunteers told us about life in a host project:**

*"I share a flat with a boy from Costa Rica and two Germans in the age of 18-20 years that do a social volunteer year. We all work in the same project that pays the rent for the flat. (...) It is located near the city centre. Public transportation, supermarket and doctors are also close. The difference between living in a shared flat and living in a host family is that living in a flat can be very difficult. You discover the city and how everything works in a foreign country almost alone. It can also be difficult to live in a shared flat, when something doesn't work with living together you have to be flexible." (Juan from Bolivia 07/08)*

*"That was probably the biggest problem I faced throughout this whole year: loneliness. Because I didn't live with a host family and not even in a shared flat with other people; when I was home, I was most of the time alone. Being alone in the afternoons after work, having no one to talk to before I went to bed, cooking and eating alone ... there were some times that were really tough. Luckily, more towards the end of the year, the situation got better. Mainly because of the fact that I can now*

*“speak German and so, it got easier to talk to people and to make new friends.” (Sophie from Costa Rica, 09/10)*

### **3. Sharing a flat with other volunteers**

Since it is more and more difficult to find families and projects for volunteers in Germany ICJA is starting to rent flats for the volunteers. In those flats a group of 3-7 volunteers is living independently, support by ICJA regional group and the regional coordinator. So, be prepared to live independently. Depending on your current living situation this can be a big challenge. This is a relative new situation since the programme year 2023-2024.

**Please note! You can not choose, in which living situation you will be living. Where we place you depends on many factors, especially also your project. Of course, we will try to consider, what you write in you application form on the living situation you prefer, but we can not guarantee that you will get it.**

### **3 Project options when living in a host family**

In this chapter we present some typical projects we offer if you stay with a host family. Don't expect to be able to work in all these kinds of projects that are described below. Which project you will be working in depends of your profile and mostly on the area where your host family lives.

#### **B) WORKING WITH CHILDREN**

Many volunteers who live with a host family do their voluntary service in a kindergarten, nursery or a day-care-centre. Working with children gives you a good chance to learn and practice the language because the children will just start talking to you. You get to know new games, creative activities and educational methods and maybe you can also show the children games from your country. This kind of work demands a lot of patience from you and you should like to be with children and to play with them. You should also be good in setting limits for the children and sometimes to say "no" to what they want. Working in a kindergarten helps you to experience many traditional (i.e. carnival), religious (i.e. Easter) and other cultural events. Work usually starts at 8 o'clock a.m. and lasts until 2 or 4 o'clock p.m. every week day.

#### **Project example: Kindergarten**

Area of project:	Childcare
Aim of project:	Looking after small children aged 2 – 6 years. Supporting the development of their physical, language and social skills.
Activities of project:	Taking care of and doing activities with the children.
Volunteer requirements:	He/she should be interested in working with small children, be flexible, cooperative, have patience, be creative and be ready to fulfil tasks in the project.
Volunteer tasks:	For the staff, it is important that the volunteer gets to know the project and the language, but it is also important that the volunteer presents his/her own country to the children. In the beginning of the exchange year, the volunteer has time to get used to everything. He/she handles small tasks

like playing with the children or helping them to tidy up and to set the table. Later, the volunteer can take on responsibilities within small groups. This depends very much on the skills of the volunteer.

### **Here's what former volunteers told us about their work:**

*"Something that called my attention about this kind of education in Germany is how the kids learn by playing, that was totally new for me and I think this kind of teaching method is very effective and of course the best way for the kids to learn, and so they don't get easily bored. We also made many activities that normally in my country in a kindergarten we don't do, like go for a walk or plant, or once we slept in the kindergarten with the kids who were going to start the school, or go to visit other kindergartens, or have a day with their grandparents and play some old games; everything was new and interesting for me. I also learned a lot from the kids, especially the language." (Verónica from Honduras, 06/07)*

*"The project where I worked was a little difficult in the beginning, but as it got better with the language, so did the project. The kids with whom I worked helped me a lot with my language. I think there is no faster way to learn German than with children." (Roshan from India, 09/10)*

### **B) WORKING IN OPEN EDUCATIONAL OFFERS, e.g. YOUTH CENTRES**

Youth centres or youth organisations are places where young people can meet in their spare time. What they offer can vary a lot. For example, they organise events, they might have a café, they offer workshops or advice for different problems. For this work you have to be open-minded towards adolescents with different backgrounds. In some cases, young people live in difficult family situations, or they are immigrants, or they have problems in school, etc. The volunteer's tasks in such a project depend a lot on the concept and programme of the youth centre, but also on your own initiative. In most cases, the tasks of the volunteers are to organise events and spend time with the adolescents. It is very important that you clearly know your role as a volunteer in this kind of project. There is a difference between you and the young people that come to the youth centre, although you might be of the same age. You work there, so you have to act accordingly and take responsibility.

#### **Project example: Big Tipi**

Area of project:

Youth recreation area

Aim of project:	The project is part of a youth development programme organised by the youth welfare office. They are organizing motional, creative as well as educational activities for kids, families and adolescents. The project is considered an exceptional place for different cultural contributions and events. It is an adventure playground, (30.000 km <sup>2</sup> ), including different floor spaces: a forest, grassland for different activities. There are also animals, fireplaces, a "teepee village", a barrier-free playground, a mountain bike route, a beach with little pod, an open class room, a garden, a basket ball court, the Big Tipi (the world's biggest teepee), a six meters high ropes course as well as ropes course elements in the forest. It offers children and juveniles possibilities to explore their capacities, get self confidence and to be looked after.
Activities of project:	Open educational offerings and workshops, guided programmes for school classes and organised events
Volunteer requirements:	He/she should enjoy the work with children and also be willing to work with children from all social and cultural backgrounds. He/she should enjoy sports activities and craftsmanship, be open minded and cooperative. Basic knowledge of German language is helpful.
Volunteer tasks:	Assisting in every day activities, feeding the animals, taking care of the fire pit, doing activities with the children.

**Here's what former and present volunteers told us about their work:**

*"These centres are places where young people can meet other teenagers in their spare time (after school). They offer a lot of things that young people could be interested for example; events like holiday's programme, exhibitions, workshops. In my personal opinion I found out how social pedagogical works with different teenager's background. I had the chance to interact with them, see their behaviour and to know about their likes and dislikes. You have to be open-minded because you have to be able to be in contact with all kind of situations like depression, immigration problems, homosexuality etc. I really enjoyed spending my time with them. Surely I will miss them."* (Jessy from Honduras 08/09)

*"My name is Gabriel and I think Big Tipi is an excellent project for me. I am working two month and I have find very funny and polite people. It is a project where you can work with kids, children, adult people. My principal task is help the people, preparing bonfire, stockbrot, picking up the wood from the factories, picking up food from the Refugees places, cooking, climbing trees or the Tipi, crafts or riding Mountain bike or longboard. Every day we have a meeting where I can know what I will do the day. I am very Happy. I like the project because you have too many activities that you can do it."*  
(Gabriel from Ecuador, 15/16)

### **C) SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL ASSISTANCE**

In the last years ICJA has increased the cooperation with schools and associations which organize school assistance and after-school care. The German school system divides between elementary schools from grade 1-4 (age 6-10) and then differs between a secondary school ("Realschule" grade 5-10) and Gymnasium (grade 5-12). Moreover there are private schools which teach children with special needs or disabilities. In many federal states the education system already offers school times during the whole day or until late afternoon. This is especially needed by parents who work full-time. These schools usually offer lunch for the children.

When working in a school your tasks can vary from taking care of the school grounds, assisting in the school kitchen and supervising the children in their breaks and free time after classes. If your German skills are sufficient you may also help them with their homework and accompany the teachers during lessons.

Working in schools will give you a good impression about the German education system. Projects usually expect pedagogical experience in a certain amount and the ability to handle groups of many children with patience and enjoyment.

#### **Project example: Waldorfschule**

Area of project:	Elementary School for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties
Aim of project:	The project's aim is to develop the emotional, social and personal skills of children with disabilities.
Project activities:	Supporting the children's rhythmical work and artwork. The school assists with therapeutic work, skilled manual and social work. They offer individual social care and excursions.

Volunteer requirements: The volunteer should be tolerant towards the children. He/she should be empathetic and interested in their differences and special needs. Special handiwork skills are appreciated.

Volunteer tasks: The volunteer can participate and support in all daily activities, such as the classes or the outdoor activities. It would be also possible that the volunteer talks about his/her home country and culture.

### **Here's what our present volunteer told us about his work:**

*"Help the kids with any task they have but of course I like it better when I have to use the languages I speak. Play with the kids in the school playground and put an eye on them in the break time Look after some kids with special needs. Walk with them to the sport class. Go walking in the forest with the kids. Go to the swimming lessons with the kids and swim with them. Help teachers fix some material they may need for their lessons. Help in the kitchen, wash dishes, set the table and any other stuff people from the kitchen need.*

*Being surrounded by kids helps me a lot to learn the language they are very nice, we work, talk, play and have a lot of fun... and the work in the kitchen is very nice as well because everyone in the kitchen they all are so nice and help me to learn German we joke and talk all the time and they let me to be the first one trying the food. Lecker!!!!*

*I love the teachers they all are so friendly and they all ask me to be in their class with their kids, I always ask them if they need something... I love it" (Sergio from Mexico, 15/16)*

### **D) WORK WITH ELDERLY PEOPLE**

Usually projects with elderly people are residential projects but in some cases volunteers live in a host family and work in an elderly residence. Old people who move into these homes are sometimes not able to take care of themselves independently any more. Some of them have kept most of their physical and mental abilities and only need help in a few respects. Others need a lot of care or they are confused and forget a lot of things that happened just recently or some time ago.

There are different areas of work: to assist them in their daily life, for example help in preparing meals and talk to them as well as to organise leisure time activities for them. Working with elderly people generally is the opportunity to familiarise yourself with their past, their personal life stories, their perspectives about the world and their situation in our society. Generally, you should like to speak to old people and be a patient listener to

them - then you can learn a lot. You should be aware that working with elderly people might mean assisting the professional staff in everyday caring.

### **Project example: Elderly Home**

Area of project:	Elderly
Aim of project:	Taking care of elderly people who are unable to live on their own due to their age, mental or physical disabilities
Activities of project:	Accompanying older people during their days. Assisting them during mealtimes and keeping them company in their free time e.g. escorting them to the supermarket or playing board games. The home also offers a lot of free time activities and workshops.
Volunteer requirement:	He/she should be willing to work with elderly. Empathy and patience is required.
Volunteer tasks:	The volunteer is assisting the social team of the house. They are organizing workshops and events for the inhabitants. He/she will help them during art class or during free time. Main task is to keep them company and listen.

### **Here's what our present volunteer tells us about her work:**

*"Yes I really like my work now - before was very difficult because I didn't know the language, the people there. It was my first job in my life but now I love it so much my team ist sehr schön (very nice). I make the residents happy and have a good time .We play Bingo, Kegeln or we sing and in the evenings we have waffle baking. We also have lesengruppe (reading group), and kreative gruppe (creative group for handicrafts). So they always have something to do. And at 12 pm we have Mittagessen (luch) and I help every day. like that everyone on the resident there touched my heart really!!*

*I'm so lucky for being there because my team is also friendly they have a lot of patience with me because every day I make mistakes. And I'm so grateful with them."* (Cristina from Ecuador, 15/16)

## **E) WORK WITH MENTALLY OR PHYSICALLY DISABLED PEOPLE**

ICJA offers different projects which work together with people with mental or physical disabilities. Occasionally our volunteers work in schools which also teach children with disabilities in so called integrative classes. There are special educational centers for young people with mental or learning disabilities to prepare them for the job market. Other facilities want to integrate handicapped adults within the job market and give them the opportunity to work in companies where they are trained and socially included.

If you want to work with disabled people, you should be prepared to accept them with their special needs and have a lot of patience. You should also be prepared to assist the professional staff in everyday caring tasks. For more information about the work with disabled people in general, see the description in chapter 4.

## **F) OTHER (ecological & cultural projects & human rights)**

**In exceptional cases** we sometimes cooperate with different kinds of ecological organisations and cultural institutions. If you are just interested in this kind of projects, Germany should not be your choice! But if this is an option, among others, please indicate it in your application form. Please be aware that working in those fields might consist of relatively monotone administration work if you don't have a proficient level of German.

## **4 Residential Projects**

In the following chapter, we describe work projects with accommodation at the project. These are usually homes for elderly people, homes and living communities for people with disabilities, seamen missions, youth projects and seminar houses. All other projects usually don't offer accommodation. **Please read the description of our residential projects in chapter 2 carefully.** Most of our projects are in remote areas without any bigger cities around.

## **A) WORK WITH MENTALLY OR PHYSICALLY DISABLED PEOPLE**

Project placements for people with mental or physical disabilities are usually either assisted living facilities for people with disabilities or places where they produce handicrafts or simple industrial products. Working in such projects gives you the chance

to meet and familiarise people with different kinds of disabilities, their special needs, their cheerfulness, their personal abilities and their living situation in German society. You will experience how to deal with people with disabilities in their normal daily life and will learn about methods of how to teach them new skills. Tasks for volunteers are usually to help them in their living situation. That means to talk to them, to support them with their work and to realise activities with them in their free time as well as to help them with daily activities like eating and dressing. If you want to work with disabled people, you should be prepared to accept them with their special needs, have a lot of patience and be open to assist the professional staff in caring. Sometimes, you also will be confronted with physical work. Working with disabled people often offers you to experience many traditional, religious and cultural events, especially if you work in an anthroposophic place.

### **Anthroposophical residences for people with special needs (disabled people)**

Anthroposophical residences are social-therapeutic living- and working communities for people with special needs, based on anthroposophical principles and ideas. Here, people with and without disabilities share their life and work together. The therapeutic working areas can be: bakery, gardening, carpentry, domestic work, kitchen, repairing. Working in such a community means for you that you will be working with idealist people who believe in this alternative way of life. Often they do not make a clear definition between working hours and private life. This means that you will have to be open for this kind of life style. Also take into consideration that these residences are mostly situated in the country side.

#### **What does "anthroposophy" mean?**

Anthroposophy is a human oriented spiritual philosophy, mainly developed by Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925) at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. It is important to know that anthroposophy is not a cult or a sect!

**Note:** There are not only anthroposophical residences but also schools and kindergartens who are anthroposophically oriented. Waldorf education (education linked to the anthroposophical philosophy) are not only legal registered education institutes in Germany but supported by the government. The final degree of a Waldorf school is valued as any other degree of a secondary school in Germany. Waldorf education is based on a holistic view on human beings and wants to support the inner growth of a person. In difference to the common schools Waldorf schools for example do not evaluate with grades but every student gets a personal report. Waldorf schools offer a big variety of fine arts subjects. It is important that you tell us in advance if you do not want to work in an institution that is based on anthroposophy!

## **Do you have doubts or fears working with handicapped people?**

Some volunteers are afraid if they can cope to work with people with mental disabilities. But our experience shows that most of them really enjoy working with people with disabilities, even if in the beginning they have not thought about working in this area. You will feel that your work is needed and useful.

### **Project example: Rehabilitations and care centres (Pflegeeinrichtung)**

Area of project:	Disabled, elderly
Aims of project:	Rehabilitation and care centre for elderly and people with disabilities (mental and/or physical), 2500 residents. Assisting and helping the residents in their daily life activities as well as to strengthen their own individual abilities.
Project activities:	Therapeutic workshops, physiotherapy, medical care, leisure time activities, group activities, school, possibility to give training in the technical sector.
Volunteer requirements:	He/she should have basic knowledge of German and the willingness to cooperate and work with people with disabilities.
Volunteer tasks:	Assisting the staff in caring for residents (children, adolescents, grown-ups or elderly persons). Specific tasks will depend on the interests and skills of the volunteer.
Host situation:	In a house, together with other young people doing a voluntary social year.

### **Here's what former volunteers told us about their work:**

*"I adapted quickly in my project. I have a good contact with the kids and the relationship with my colleagues is good. I can use my skills and I am learning the language and how to be an adult in charge of a kid. The project has always supported me. I am usually in charge of one kid but often take care of the other kids too. That year is helpful because I have adapted me well with a teenager with autisms. I am really living a great experience."* (Wilmer from Columbia, 11/12)

*"I worked with disabled children, like a nurse for them, I worked in the place where they live, so I had to clean them, change their clothing, play with them, clean the rooms, take them to toilet, shower them, go out with them, help them to eat and many other things. It is a very hard work but you learn to love it (...). You work hard and very seriously like the others, you will discover many things of life and about yourself too." (Mariel from Honduras, 05/06)*

## **B) WORK WITH ELDERLY PEOPLE**

Working with elderly people generally is the opportunity to familiarise yourself with the past, their personal life stories, their perspectives about the world and their situation in our society. If you want to work with elderly people, you will usually work in residences for elderly people. Old people who move into these homes are sometimes not able to take care of themselves independently any more. Some of them have kept most of their physical and mental abilities and only need help in a few respects. Others need a lot of care or they are confused and forget a lot of things that happened just recently or some time ago. There are different areas of work: to assist them in their daily life, for example help in preparing meals, to feed them and talk to them as well as to organise leisure time activities for them. At a residence for older people you are most likely to work in shifts. Your working schedule will have working hours either from early in the morning until around noon or from noon until evening. It also often means weekend duties. When you work during the weekend, you will have your days off in the next week. Generally, you should like to speak to old people and be patient listening to them. You should also be prepared to do physical work and assist the professional staff in everyday care tasks.

**For project example see page 13.**

## **C) SEAMEN'S MISSIONS**

Seamen's missions are located in cities with harbours. They offer support to seamen that come with the big transport ships from all over the world to the harbours. In many cases, the seamen only stay for a short time in a harbour, although they have been on the ship for months. So they have no possibility to go to the city centre, to a shop, a bar or an internet café. The seamen missions help them with these kinds of things. The co-workers visit them on the ships and bring newspapers and other things to them, or the seamen can come to the seamen's club in the harbour, where they can buy things for their daily need, watch TV, play billiard, use the internet, etc. The co-workers in the seamen's missions are also there to listen to the seamen when they need someone to talk to about their thoughts and problems. Sometimes the seamen's missions also provide

accommodation for seamen. Since seamen's missions have a Christian background, they offer also the possibility to take part in prayers and sermons.

When you are interested in working in a seamen's mission you should be open towards people from different cultures and interested in the special situation of seamen. Their life can be hard most of the time. They are far away from their families and spend long periods of time isolated on the sea. You should have a good knowledge of English and it is an advantage to have a driver's licence.

### **Project example: Internationaler Seemannsclub Hamburg-Altona**

Area of Project:	Attending international seamen
Aims of project:	Offer basic services for seamen from all around the world. The seamen's club is supported by the church and donations from companies and people.
Project activities:	The project offers different services, e.g. post service, money sending a bus service and a bar. For entertainment there is Billiard, internet a library and more.
Volunteer requirements:	He/she should have good knowledge of English and be a social person who likes to get to know new people. A driver's licence is necessary.
Volunteer tasks:	He/she will be driving, working at the bar and in the shop to exchange the money and take care of the post service. The volunteer will be responsible for the shopping for club, do cleaning chores and answer the phone. For the visitors the volunteer can be an advisor (when seamen have problems), social worker, hospital visitor or tourist guide.
Host situation:	You will have your own room on the same floor as other German and international volunteers.

### **Here's what a former volunteer told us about her work:**

*"In the seamen mission we work with seamen from all over the world. The people work in giving orientation to the seamen, buying the food for the club, selling food, drinks or phone cards to the seamen, driving from the club to the ships, cleaning the club, changing money. It is interesting to know the work of the seamen and different cultures in the world. I like that the work is dynamic and*

*the people in the club are nice. It is difficult that you often work in the night, you finish very late and sometimes you must work on weekends.” (Patricia from Colombia, 07/08)*

## **D) RESIDENTIAL PROJECTS WITH YOUTH AND CHILDREN**

We offer some residential projects that deal with children and young adults and their families. Some of them are in institutions for adolescents with a difficult social background and others are organisations that provide leisure time activities. We can also offer some volunteer placements in boarding schools. Every kind of project requires other abilities. For more general information about working with youth and children see also chapter 3.

### **Project example: Hagenschule**

Area of Project:	School
Aims of project:	The teaching concept follows the Montessori pedagogy, and they aim at teaching their pupils not only academically, but also educate them for life in general.
Project activities:	The School is an inclusive school that is independently operated and that teaches children from year 1 to year 7 who learn in study groups of mixed ages.
Volunteer requirements:	He/she should be responsible, have a sense of openness and the willingness to learn. Basic German skills are appreciated. Experience in the pedagogical field of Montessori or other alternative progressive educational movements are useful.
Volunteer tasks:	He/she will be assisting the teachers during language class and prepare teaching material. The volunteer will assist during free time and supervise work groups in the afternoon.
Host situation:	The project provides an apartment close to the school in which 3 international volunteers live.

### **Here’s what our present volunteers told us about their work:**

*“I want to share with you a little bit about my project in Germany. I work in a school in a city called Hagen, this school uses the Montessori Method. To me it has been quite interesting because it gives the kids the freedom to do things on their own.*

*Here I help in different tasks like cooking classes, going to trips to the forest, learning about nature and culture, but mainly I am focus on helping them to learn English and Spanish. Kids are always up to learn new things and subjects, so you can help in your own way.*

*I live in a share flat with other two volunteers. This gives you the opportunity to do more things on your own and learn about other cultures besides German culture.*

*But the most important thing is that you get a new family!” (Silvia from Mexico, 15/16)*

*“My tasks in the projects are assisting teachers, taking care of special children, taking children to the forest, Tennis and sports. I support in the Kitchen and give technical help to the school staff since I am from engineering background.*

*Sometimes I am unable to understand what exactly children wanted and I feel down because of the language barrier and at the same time I motivate myself to learn the language fast*

*I am living in an apartment with two more Mexican volunteers. We have our separate rooms and a common kitchen. Every day I have to ride a bus to go to my project. I am not much experiencing German culture since I am living separately (Without host family)” (Raj from India, 15/16)*

## **E) SEMINAR HOUSES; EDUCATIONAL CENTRES AND YOUTH HOSTELS**

Working in seminar houses, hostels or educational centres means being together with (young) adults and people from other cultures and nationalities. The volunteers usually work and live together with other German volunteers, in some way they “replace” the host family. You will be able to learn a lot about German culture and traditions living with people in your age. It needs a high level of personal responsibility as in most cases you are on your own. This is why ICJA offers this type of projects mostly to volunteers who have already lived on their own or who are older than 21.

As a volunteer your tasks will be all around the house. They vary from assisting in the kitchen, housekeeping and working outside in the grounds. After your language skills have improved you will be able to support the team in looking after the guests/visitors, answering the phone or assisting in administrative work. Overall you need to be service oriented and able to work organized and structured.

Every year ICJA offers several residential projects in this field. Volunteers need to be aware that most of them are located in remote areas and you will need a driver’s license because public transportation is not always available around the clock.

## **Project example: Youth hostel**

Area of project:	Non profit accommodation provider with approx. 10.000 guests per year.
Aim of project:	Offering low-priced accommodation and facilitating the encounter of young people from all over the world, thus promoting mutual understanding.
Activities of project:	Offering accommodation to mostly young people from Germany and from all over the world
Volunteer requirements:	He/she should speak English and a basic knowledge of German would be useful. The volunteers need to be flexible, open minded, prepared to work late-night and weekend shifts.
Volunteer tasks:	Your tasks will be helping in the kitchen and the dining room, sometimes doing house maintenance. After some months, when you will speak more German: attending clients and working at the reception.
Hosting situation:	In a room inside the youth hostel, partly in a separate area with other volunteers.

### **Here's what our volunteers tell us about their work:**

*"At the moment I live only for around 2 months in Lübeck, but I like the ambient of my job, especially because of my coworkers. Since the first day they tried to support me. Until now my job in this project consists in cleaning the dishes, cleaning some rooms (which are not so big), helping with the buffets (breakfast, lunch or dinner). In my opinion the tasks that I do for the beginning you don't have to interact with the german language, but it depends on you (I always try to talk to my coworkers when I am working ) and when I don't have to work I like to spend my time in the room for the guests. There I can watch TV and have good conversations. Normally the people who come here are interested in talking. So it is a good possibility to meet new people and make new friends."* (Saul from Colombia, 15/16)

*"My Social year was in a Young Hostel (Jugendherberge) in Hamburg. At the beginning all was really hard, the language, people, customs, food, the behavior of the people. The language is very hard, but*

*all depends only of you. If you want to learn quickly, only you have to work for that. The accommodation was simple: I have my room, my bed, and desk. My tasks were mainly with the house keep team. I had to check that all in the Hostel were good, however, sometimes I helped at the reception with some Spanish speakers, doing translation with the team, also did some tasks as paint, or repair some stuff in the rooms, but my whole year was in general working with the wash machine and cleaning rooms.*

*About the team, they are the more awesome people that I have knew in my life. Most of them are young people around of 20-25 years old, and is so easy talk with them about whatever. Also they always tried to include me in other activities. In my opinion, my year was great, maybe I hoped some more different and I was a little disappointed but after that, when I began to speak German and surround from the team I started to feel as home.” (Jorge from Colombia, 15/16)*

## **IMPORTANT NOTE ABOUT PLACEMENT OF THE VOLUNTEERS**

**The projects mentioned in this document, are only examples we give in order to provide a general idea of how the voluntary service in one kind of placement or another could be.**

**The placement of the volunteer depends on different factors and elements that are directly related to the profile of the volunteers, their interests and abilities, the availability and the living situation.**

**Our Team does its best in order to find the possibility that fits the best with each of the participants. Nevertheless, we cannot guarantee a placement in one specific field, and we expect our volunteers to be open to different project types, as the focus of the programme is not the professional work experience or career booster but the social and intercultural experience.**

## 5 Information we need from you

In order to find a proper placement for you, we have to know whether you would prefer to live in a project or with a host family. Of course, we also need to know what you would like to do.

**Please fill in the enclosed Interest and Priorities documents as well as the motivation letter you can find at the end of this booklet.**

**On the following two pages, you will also find a document called "Rights and Obligations of the international volunteer from the ICYE program in his/her project". Please read it carefully, sign it and send it with your candidate's application.**

In addition to your choice, please write us as much as possible about your preferences and the reasons for your choice. **The more information you give us about your personality, your background, previous (work-) experiences, your motivation, wishes etc. the better you enable us to select a family and/or project which correspond to your needs and wishes.**

**VERY IMPORTANT** is that you explain thoroughly in your MOTIVATION LETTER why you want to do the exchange year, what you hope to find and to learn and why and how it fits into your life situation or life concept.

You can write this in German or English. After having received this information, we will try our best to find an adequate placement for you.

**Please be aware all that you cannot apply for one of these projects in particular! If you mention them in your interest and priorities, it gives us an impression what your interests are. So, we will try to find a project of this type. The same applies to your wishes concerning host situation in Germany. We will take it into account but without any guarantee!**

## **6 Rights and Obligations**

### **of the international volunteer from the ICYE program in his/her project**

#### **Rights of the volunteer (1/2)**

- The volunteer has the right to receive an appropriate training in the project to be able to do the work he/ she is expected to do.
- The volunteer should have a tutor in the project whom he/she can turn to when he/she has a question or a problem and from whom he/she gets feedback. There should be a meeting between the volunteer and his/her tutor at least once a month. The tutor should possess sufficient foreign language skills to enable communication.
- The volunteer cannot be asked to do work which is against her/his (religious or ethical) convictions.
- In case of conflicts the volunteer as well as the project can ask for mediation by the volunteer's mentor from the regional group as well as the staff at the ICJA office.
- The volunteer has the right to receive pocket money (302 Euros) that includes the costs of transportation to and from the project. (The ICJA office will negotiate with the project regarding the amount of pocket money and how it will be paid prior to the arrival of the volunteer.)
- The volunteer should not work more than five days a week. Volunteers that have to work on weekends due to project-specific reasons have the right to get time off during the following week. The volunteer has to get at least two weekends off a month.
- The volunteer has the right to 2,5 days off a month; this corresponds to more or less to 30 days off in 12 months. Vacation days have to be approved by the project in advance and this amount might vary in a couple of days depending on the agreement with the project.
- The volunteer has the right and the obligation to join three seminars (orientation-camp (two parts), mid-term evaluation camp and evaluation camp) organised by ICYE as well as program-specific seminars if applicable. The time spent at the seminar as well as the time travelling to and from the seminar is not counted as vacation time but as work time.
- The volunteer has the right to receive a letter of reference from the project at the end of his/her voluntary year.

## Obligations of the volunteer (2/2)

- The volunteer must respect the regulations of labor law in his/her host country.
- The volunteer is expected to respect the principles of his/her project.
- The volunteer is expected to work a minimum of 35 and a maximum of 39 hours a week. Within this given range, the project determines the specific weekly working hours.
- In case of illness the volunteer must inform the project immediately. If he/she is sick for longer than three days, the volunteer must hand in a medical certificate from the doctor. When the illness lasts longer than one week, he/she should also inform the ICJA office.
- After a training period, the volunteer should be involved in interesting and challenging work, but should also be willing to do routine work which is important for the functioning of the project. This highly depends on the language skills and performance of the participant.
- If there are any problems with the work the volunteer is doing he/she is asked to first contact his/her mentor from the regional group. In case no agreement can be found, the volunteer and the project are asked to contact the ICJA office for mediation.
- Visits from friends and family are not allowed during seminar times. No exceptions.
- The volunteer accepts his/her obligation to attend the hours of German language classes provided before his/her time on Germany, except if he/she already speaks German at a B1-level.

I hereby confirm that I read and understood the „Rights and Obligations of the international volunteer from the ICYE program in his/her project“.

---

Name of the volunteer

---

Place and Date

## 7 Interests and priorities

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ AGE: \_\_\_\_\_

COUNTRY: \_\_\_\_\_

### **INTEREST AND PRIORITY LIST**

Hopefully you have read carefully the work profile giving you an insight into the various kinds of volunteer work placements in Germany. To find a good placement for you, we need to know as much as possible about your interests, priorities and skills.

*Please fill in this form completely (in English, German or Spanish) and return it to ICYE Germany as part of your application form. While filling in the following form please number the alternatives, with 1 as your first choice, 2 as second choice, and so on. DON'T USE ONLY MARKS, USE NUMBERS TO PRIORIZE.*

#### ***I prefer to live***

- \_\_\_ with a host family
- \_\_\_ where I work / residential project
- \_\_\_ sharing a flat with other volunteers

#### ***I prefer to work with / in:***

*(\*read note in the next page)*

- \_\_\_ small children (1 - 6 years old)
- \_\_\_ children (6 - 12 years old)
- \_\_\_ youth ( 13 – 21 years old)
- \_\_\_ elderly/old people
- \_\_\_ people with disabilities
- \_\_\_ cultural field
- \_\_\_ seminar houses, seamen's missions, youth hostel
- \_\_\_ educational centres
- \_\_\_ manual work
- \_\_\_ ecological project
- \_\_\_ refugees / displaced persons (*proficient level of german language required*)
- \_\_\_ other \_\_\_\_\_ *(\*read important note in the next page)*

**\*IMPORTANT NOTE ABOUT WORK PREFERENCES: Applications that don't contain a proper and complete numbered list (from 1 to 11) will be processed to the end as that information is the basis of the placement process.**

**Skills I have now and could share:**

- |                                       |                                     |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| ___ experience with children          | ___ experience with disabled people |
| ___ experience with old people        | ___ experience in agricultural work |
| ___ experience in nursery work        | ___ administration                  |
| ___ carpentry, construction, building | ___ teaching, subjects _____        |
| ___ others _____                      |                                     |

**Please tell us where, when and for how long you gained these skills:**

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**Language skills I have:**

Language	fluent	can communicate basically, write basic sentences	no knowledge
German			
English			
Other:			
Other:			

**Please be aware all that what you mention in your interest and priorities will give us an impression what your interests are. So, we will try to find a project of this type. The same applies to your wishes concerning your host situation in Germany. We will take it into account but without any guarantee!**

## 8 Motivation letter

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ AGE: \_\_\_\_\_

RESIDENCE COUNTRY: \_\_\_\_\_

### **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 ideas and 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 WhatsApp every day?

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