



## **ASB      Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund**

### **Voluntary Social Services – Time to get involved**

#### **You want**

- to get to know life in Germany in a unique way and gain valuable experience?
- to improve your German language skills?
- to familiarize yourself with the working routines of different kinds of professions?
- to try out which professional tasks and activities fit best for you?
- to find out which professional training or area of study you would like to choose after your voluntary service?

#### **Commit yourself as a volunteer at Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund and help others!**

In Germany exist two types of volunteer social services: the federal volunteer service, *Bundesfreiwilligendienst (BFD)* and the voluntary social year, *Freiwillige Soziale Jahr (FSJ)*. ASB provides programs for both types of volunteer services. Part of a volunteer service is to support a social aid facility. The activity sites of volunteers (*in German "Einsatzstelle"*) can be day care centers, nursing facilities or elderly homes as well as residences for people with disabilities. A coordinating agency is responsible for planning and coordinating the volunteer service. We call them "Träger". You do not need any professionell or special training to become a volunteer in Germany. You take on duties that go beyond the core services provided by the social-welfare-oriented place of assignment. However a precondition is a good basic knowledge of German level A1 or A2.

#### **The volunteer service sets out special requirements. It is traded as orientation time not as employment relationship:**

- A volunteer service takes minimum six, sometimes 18 month. In this time as a volunteer you are committed between 21 (26 years and older) and 40 hours a week.
- Your volunteer activities vary in regards of your activity site: supporting elderly people with housework or shopping, playing with children and accompany them on trips or offering own projects. You are accompanied by a full-time employee in the social aid facility which is your contact point regarding your tasks and questions.
- The FSJ/BFD is not just about working in your activity site, you also participate in trainings and workshops. You meet volunteers of other social facilities with: you can exchange experiences, discuss current political debates and social issues. You also take part at activities dedicated to creativity and job orientation. The seminars are



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lasting several days. Despite not taking place at your activity site, time spent on days of education is regarded as being part of your working hours. Seminars, accommodation at seminar venue and travel costs are free of charge!

- As a volunteer you receive a pocket money. Working clothes if needed are also free of charge. **Please note:** If you are seeking for asylum or if you get welfare provisions, the financial benefits will be reduced in case of taking part at a volunteer service. Nevertheless conducting a volunteer service finally improves your financial situation.
- For the duration of your FSJ/BFD you get an ID which gets you discounts at many places. For example it is often accepted for public transport or in cinemas and museums.
- As a volunteer involved in the volunteer services you are in a status as trainee with respect to social security. All contributions for statutory pension, accident, health, nursing and unemployment insurance are paid by your activity site.
- You are also entitled to vacation during the time of your volunteer service.
- At the end of your volunteer commitment you receive a certificate for your service. It lists up exactly what kind of tasks you did in your activity site and what you've learned.

First of all, your volunteer service should be an enjoyable experience for you!

If you want to come to Germany to volunteer in a voluntary social service you have to make sure that you are allowed to be in Germany during your service period. You will either need a visa, a residence permit or none of the two. This is depending on your nationality.

- **Residents of the European Union** do **not** need a visa or a residence permit (*in German it is called "Aufenthaltserlaubnis zum Zwecke der Erwerbstätigkeit" or just "Aufenthaltserlaubnis"*) to come to Germany. You can live in Germany, work in Germany, study in Germany or you can do a voluntary social service in Germany. As the income from FSJ/BFD will not cover all the expenses you have to make sure you can finance your stay in Germany (e.g. through regular support from your parents). As a volunteer coming to Germany you need to register in Germany. You can ask your landlord or someone at your activity site where the registration office in your town is.

**Please note:** You need a valid health insurance! And you can't get social welfare benefits during the first three months after you have registered.

- **People from Australia, Israel, Japan, Canada, New Zealand, South Korea, USA** can come to Germany whenever they like, but for a voluntary social service they need a special permit, this is called residence permit. In German it is called



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„Aufenthaltserlaubnis zum Zwecke der Erwerbstätigkeit“ and allows you to live and work in Germany. You can get the permit at the foreigners' authority, in German “Ausländerbehörde”. Once you are in Germany, you have three months to apply for the permit. You cannot start with your voluntary social service until you have a residence permit. To get your residence permit, you need a lot of documents. The following link provides you detailed information:

<http://www.pro-fsj.de/en/information-people-who-are-not-german>

- **People who are not citizens of the European Union** are called third country nationals in Germany. They need a visa to come to Germany. If you are a third country national you have to apply for a visa at the German embassy or consulate in your home country **before** you come to Germany.

You need a special visa for a voluntary social service, so you cannot use a visa you already have (e.g. for studying or being an au pair in Germany). If you are already residing in the Federal Republic of Germany (e.g. as an au-pair) you can receive information on where to apply for a visa for a subsequently scheduled FSJ / BFD at the relevant foreigners authority at your place of residence. If the immigration office does not extend your visa you need to go to your home country and apply for a new visa there.

### **The following procedure has been determined:**

- 1) Your activity site or coordinating agency provide an official confirmation about your volunteer service opportunity. This contract is also called agreement, or in German “*Vereinbarung über den Freiwilligendienst*”. All the rights and obligations are regulated in this agreement, which is signed by the social facility, the coordinating agency and by you as the volunteer.
- 2) This confirmation/agreement is then submitted *from you* to the German embassy in your home country to apply for a visa for the planned duration of the FSJ / BFD. In general, visa for an extended stay shall be requested to the competent diplomatic mission before traveling.
- 3) In any event, relevant documents concerning your purposed activities (e.g. FSJ/BFD agreement) and usually also documents relating to your intended accommodation in the Federal Republic of Germany (e.g. tenancy agreement, letter of motivation etc.) are to be submitted. As the income from FSJ/BFD will not cover all the expenses you often have to prove how you will finance the long stay in Germany (e.g. through regular support from your parents). **Please note** that ASB is normally not able to provide accommodations for the volunteers!



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4) Your application is sent by the German embassy in your home country to the competent local foreigners' authority of your intended place of residence in Germany. The foreigners' authority shall examine your application and in general a positive statement is written. The approval procedure normally shall take up to three months, sometimes longer.

5) Then the German embassy in your home country provides you a visa for three month as entry permission.

6) This three month visa has to be submitted by you to the competent foreigners' registration authority at the place of residence in Germany where you will receive a resident permission for the duration of the voluntary service. No permission to work is required.

The activity site (or the coordinating agency) shall ensure that you registers at the local registration office, open an account and be registered with a medical insurance company.

Further information at <http://www.pro-fsj.de/en/information-people-who-are-not-german>.

The employees of our local branches also inform you about:

- whether they have available volunteer places,
- how to apply,
- conceptual orientation of the on-site volunteer service.

Therefore we kindly ask you to address your questions directly to the activity sites or to the ASB volunteer service coordinating agencies. Attached you can find the contact list.

**We are looking forward to your application!**