

General Information to the “Incoming” Program (*Voluntary Service in Germany*)

Spending a year in Germany, living and working together with the residents of a social institution, learning about their life, their land and yourself along the way – in short, giving your time for a **voluntary service position**. The “Incoming” program of the **Friends of Waldorf Education** offers the chance to do just that.

This 12-month volunteer placement in Germany is open to people from anywhere in the world. You will work in volunteer positions in social institutions and homes, often living together with the residents or patients during your voluntary year.

The goal of voluntary service

A voluntary service position combines learning, sharing new experiences and encounters – and helping others.

As a volunteer, your personal engagement will support the work at your placement site, while your own ideas, personality and culture will enrich the lives of those who live there.

We view our international volunteers as students of life. While gathering experience in a new cultural and occupational environment they are also given a great opportunity for personal development. In the accompanying seminars and workshops, these life and learning experiences are shared and refined through intense exchange and self-reflection. This becomes a vibrant part of the daily life and work as a volunteer.

Organisation und support

Our “Incoming” voluntary service program is coordinated by the **Friends of Waldorf Education** in Germany. The goal of our organisation is to provide worldwide support of Waldorf education and anthroposophic initiatives. We do this by arranging international voluntary service placements. You can learn more about the **Friends of Waldorf Education** at www.freunde-waldorf.de or from our information sheet “Areas of Service in the ‘Incoming’ Program”.

As coordinating organisation, the **Friends of Waldorf Education** manage the technical and legal formalities related to voluntary service – from the volunteer application process to acquisition of the necessary visas. We provide support and advice for our applicants and accompany the volunteers throughout the length of their stay in Germany. Seminars before, during and at the end of the placement period also offer support and assistance to the volunteers, and we are always ready to help in conflict or crisis situations.

Hosting organisations

Volunteers are given placements in social institutions for the duration of their service – we call these their hosting organisations. The majority of these placement sites are communal homes for social therapy (adults with disabilities), curative education (children with disabilities) and anthroposophy-based senior care (homes for the elderly). Correspondingly, the focus of our work lies primarily with people with disabilities or special needs and with the elderly.

All hosting organisations are anthroposophic institutions. They are located throughout Germany and many of them are in rural areas.

These social institutions are also normally communal living groups in which the volunteers share in the work and the care of the residents, assisting in the routine of their daily lives. A volunteer's life is thus woven into the fabric of her or his living community. You will find additional details in our information sheet "Areas of Service in the 'Incoming' Program". Further information on anthroposophy and anthroposophic work is also available at www.anthromedia.net.

Application requirements

To participate in the "Incoming" program, you must...

- have permanent residency **outside** Germany.
- be at least 18 years old (there is **no** minimum age).
- know at least the basics of the German language.
- be socially motivated and show dedication to your work.
- have already gained practical experience working in a social field or have carried out an internship or similar job placement in a social institution in your home country.
- be entirely open to living together with the residents and patients of an institution for curative education, social therapy or a home for the elderly.
- be eager for personal development and be ready to integrate yourself fully in a new culture and work environment.
- show initiative and a strong sense of social engagement, as these fields of work will, at least in part, be quite demanding. Additionally, most of the institutions are located in rural agrarian areas.

No specific training or other formal qualification is required to participate in voluntary service. We show no preference to the backgrounds of our applicants; it makes no difference whether they have just finished school, graduated from university or already have years of work experience.

However, we do require applicants who do not have **practical experience** working in a social field to carry out an internship, job placement of at least two weeks at a qualifying institution in your home country. This crucial experience gives you an opportunity to determine beforehand if such a placement is really the right decision for you. You may also carry out your internship after submitting your application. In this case we nevertheless require official documentation of the internship and its exact dates. **Please read the detailed instructions in the "Incoming" application forms for planning your internship. If we have a partner organisation in your country, you should schedule your internship there if at all possible.** We will be happy to assist you in making contact with our partners as well as organisations that fulfil our criteria.

A working knowledge of the German language is also a prerequisite for participating in our voluntary service. The level of German required for the work varies according to the hosting organisations and areas of service.

For those working in the fields of curative education (children with disabilities) and senior care (homes for the elderly), a good to excellent knowledge of German is a must. In the other areas of service fluency in German is sometimes necessary as well.

If at all possible, you should provide certification of your studies or other official proof of your German language skills. If your German is at level 2, 3 or 4 of the internationally recognised language framework, we will need to see a language certificate, your school marks or other official certification. Applicants at levels 1 or 2 will need to submit confirmation of enrolment in an intensive

German course. It is also expected that you show the initiative to improve your German both before and during the duration of your voluntary service.

We recommend that prospective applicants very carefully consider the full consequences of a voluntary service placement. Please be aware that you will be living for a longer period of time in a foreign culture and working in a social institution for people with special needs, in which you may be confronted by wholly new perspectives and ways of thinking.

The information sheets “Areas of Service in the ‘Incoming’ Program” and “FAQs – Frequently Asked Questions about the ‘Incoming’ Program” are required reading for every applicant. All potential volunteers should also visit our website www.freunde-waldorf.de to form their own opinion of “Incoming” and the work of our organisation.

Timeframe

Your voluntary service will comprise a 12-month stay at your placement site. Most volunteers (approx. 75 people) will begin their service in August/September. A smaller group of about 25 volunteers will begin in January. Voluntary service begins with an introductory seminar at a fixed date; it is therefore not possible to begin service at a time other than the given dates. This and subsequent seminars (a total of four over the course of the voluntary year) are invaluable opportunities for the volunteers to reflect on their experiences, to exchange ideas and to seek answers to their questions.

Financing and benefits

Before and during the period of service, volunteers receive the following benefits:

- Support with visa application (official invitation) prior to service
- An allowance of at least €150 per month during the duration of the service
- Free room and board while in Germany
- Free health, accident and liability insurance
- Contractually regulated holidays
- Educational and administrative backing and support through the **Friends of Waldorf Education** during the voluntary service
- 20 accompanying seminars days, free of charge, at the beginning, during and at the close of the voluntary year, as well as transportation costs to and from the seminars

There is no participation fee for the volunteers. **However, travel costs to and from Germany must be covered by the participants themselves!**

Applicants from Brazil and South Africa can receive support, advice and preparatory assistance from their local **Friends of Waldorf Education**. The volunteers themselves are expected to share the costs of a possible preparatory seminar in their home country, according to a solidarity payment scale.

For applicants who have been residing in Germany for more than two months, we request a handling fee of 10 stamps of €1,45 each (€14.50 total) or €15 in banknotes.

If you cancel your participation in the “Incoming” program within the 8 weeks prior to beginning or during the first four weeks of voluntary service, we must charge you €150 to cover expenses already paid on your part by our organisation.

How to apply and further information

Would you like to know more about our voluntary service in Germany? Please contact Diana Grözinger or Tabea Kunert at the **Friends of Waldorf Education** by e-mail or telephone. More information on the application process and necessary application materials may be found at www.freunde-waldorf.de.

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