



## FAQ – weltwärts Volunteer in Germany

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**Hey You,**

*Are all your questions answered? Do you need further help? Do you want to add information?*

*Please contact us: [weltwaerts@diz-ev.de](mailto:weltwaerts@diz-ev.de)*

*Thank you!*

## Accommodation

*Where do I live during my volunteer service?*

Accommodations vary; some volunteers live in volunteers' houses, others have rooms within houses of guest families again others share rooms with another volunteer.

## Application and Selection Procedures

*How are volunteers selected?*

Before sending your application, you can always contact us to ask for potential places of assignment as the organisations and time of the vacancies vary. All applicants are asked to submit their application via our online form: [Application Form for Voluntary Services](#). A CV, motivation letter (in English) and passport photo are needed to upload during this process. In some cases, we may ask you for a skype interview with the place of assignment before the selection. In case you are not contacting us via a sending organisation, you will be asked to contact additionally our partner organisation Dream School Foundation in Bangalore.

## BMZ

*What do the letters stand for and what does the BMZ do?*

The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ; German: Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung), is a cabinet-level ministry of the Federal Republic of Germany. Its main office is at the former German Chancellery in Bonn with a second major office at the Europahaus in Berlin.

Founded in 1961, the Ministry works to encourage economic development within Germany and in other countries through international cooperation and partnerships. It cooperates with international organizations involved in development including the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and the United Nations.

## Cars / Motorcycles

*Am I allowed to drive a car or a motorcycle in Germany?*

You are not allowed to drive a car or a motorcycle.

## Catering

*Do I get food during the day at my place of assignment?*

The places of assignment vary and not all include lunch. Volunteers receive every month a certain amount of money for self-supply (normally 150 EUR).

## Certificate of Participation

*Do I receive a qualified interim or final certificate?*

At the end of the volunteer service, i.e. after completion of the returnee's seminar each volunteer will receive a certificate of participation if you also completed at least 25 days of seminars (depending on the duration of your service).

## Child Protection Rules / Child Protection Undertaking

*What are the Child Protection Rules?*

As the name suggests, those rules deal with children's' rights which are to be confirmed and to be complied with by the volunteer who signs the related child protection undertaking.

Those volunteers working with children for example in a kindergarten need to additionally sign a police clearance certificate (about which you will be informed accordingly).

## Circle of Sponsors

*What is a circle of sponsors and how could it work?*

From German volunteers the DIZ warmly requests to contribute to the costs of the voluntary service with a personal contribution. Regarding Indian volunteers we are aware of the income inequalities and all other difference but are nevertheless happy if any volunteer contributed to the costs – which is of course not compulsory.

For this purpose, it makes sense to establish a circle of sponsors: Relatives, friends, former teachers, the parish, the neighbourhood, or companies can be members of your circle of sponsors - there are no limits to your imagination. At the beginning of the following year, every donor receives a donation receipt for the donation, which is then tax-deductible. For the DIZ, the purpose of the transfer must indicate that it is a donation for a specific volunteer or a specific volunteer activity.

## Climate

*What climatic conditions must I expect in Germany?*

In most of Germany, the climate is moderately continental, characterized by cold winters, with average daily temperatures around 0 °C or slightly above, and warm summers, with maximum temperatures around 22/24 °C in July and August. Though this changed during the last years when the climate change became noticeable with temperatures during summer of up to 40°C.

The northernmost area (see Bremen, Hamburg, Lübeck, Rostock, Kiel) is slightly milder, but it's also rainier and windier because of the influence of the Atlantic Ocean. The massifs of south-central Germany and the

small portion of the Alps in the far south have a mountainous climate, which becomes of course colder as altitude increases.

Being that Germany is exposed to both mild air masses from the Atlantic Ocean and cold air masses from Russia or the North Pole, the weather is often unstable, with remarkable changes and different meteorological situations, such as cold, heat, wind, fog, snow, and thunderstorms.

During winter, snowfalls are quite frequent though generally not abundant (except in Bavaria and in the mountains, and sometimes in the north-eastern plain). Snow is more common across the eastern belt, from Bavaria to the plains of the former GDR and up to the Baltic coast, while it is rarer in the western part, from the Rhine corridor to north-west exposed to the North Sea.

## Code of Conduct

*What is the code of conduct?*

Some of the places of assignment and / or accommodations have their own codes of conduct and are to be complied with. The codes may include rules or regulations regarding daily life (e.g. no smoking within the rooms; no visitors after midnight; not leaving the building when windows are open).

## Contract

*Do I receive a contract for my volunteering service?*

All volunteers are sent to their respective places of assignment after signing a voluntary service agreement. This agreement is binding, and questions can be discussed in detail during the preparation seminar. Changes to the volunteer agreement (extension of the volunteer service, change of project, etc.) can only be made in writing.

## Flights

*Do I have to take care by myself for travelling to Germany?*

The DIZ books all international and national flights necessary for the volunteer service. E-tickets will be sent via e-mails in due time.

## German

*Do I need to know German before volunteering?*

In some places of assignment, you do but the DIZ will let you know beforehand. This may require learning the language up to a certain level before your actual volunteer service.

## Health

*Do I need to be vaccinated against something?*

Not in general but it depends on the place of assignment. We will inform you accordingly.

*What about allergies or food intolerances?*

Please inform us beforehand so we can organise your stay accordingly.

**Please note: The DIZ cannot replace medical advice. Nor can the mere provision of information on websites replace individual medical advice.**

*What basic things must I pay attention to in order not to get sick?*

Fruits and vegetables should be washed and cleaned but you can drink tap water without cooking it before.

*What medicines should I take with me?*

In principle, all standard drugs are also available in Germany. Volunteers who need special medication should - as far as possible - take it with them from India. In case of doubt you should contact the DIZ office.

*What happens if I get seriously sick and you may have to see a doctor or to the hospital?*

The contact person of the respective place of assignment and the DIZ should be informed immediately. All places of assignment have a list of doctors of different specialities that you can go to. They will help you in case you are sick.

*How does the health insurance work?*

You have a basic health insurance which includes visits at the doctor and if necessary, a stay at the hospital.

## Insurances

*What insurances do I have?*

- Health insurance
- Repatriation insurance (usually included in the foreign health insurance)
- Accident insurance including disability
- Liability insurance

## Internet

*Can I use the internet at my accommodation for free?*

Yes, in all the accommodations internet is included. BUT: there are restrictions regarding certain pages. There are websites promoting downloading or streaming films for free though most of them are illegal even if not explicitly advertised! The volunteer is fully responsible for his or her actions and therefore liable and punishable by law. Fines are not covered by the DIZ and must be paid by him- or herself! In case costs cannot be covered, they may be deducted from your pocket money, but can under no circumstances be borne by the DIZ or the host!

## Internship

*Can I do an internship additionally to the weltwärts service during my time as volunteer?*

Short term internships are possible and permitted when aligned with the place of assignment, the DIZ and with the principles of weltwärts.

## Languages

*What languages do I need to know in order to be able to participate in the volunteer service?*

We expect the volunteers to be able to communicate fluently in English (written and spoken). For some of the places of assignment also knowledge of German (Level A2) is required right from the beginning. Language classes are financially supported by the programme. All volunteers have to be eager to learn German as it is absolutely necessary in daily life.

## Luggage

*How much luggage can I take with me?*

In principle, the weight limit is the weight indicated by the airlines: In international air traffic, a free baggage allowance of one piece of luggage with a maximum of 23 kg is usual. You should adhere to this specification, as additional weight costs extra, and the volunteers themselves are responsible for these costs. It should be noted that the free baggage allowance between international and national flights can sometimes differ considerably. Please check with the respective airlines after your flight has been booked.

## Mentor

*Who is my contact person on site in Germany?*

A mentor is assigned to the volunteers on site in Germany. The mentor will be available to discuss the status of the project and any problems with the volunteer at regular intervals. But of course you can also always contact the DIZ in case you think your issue hasn't been addressed properly.

## Own Contributions and Project Donations

*What does that mean, my own contribution?*

75 percent of the costs of the *weltwärts* voluntary service are borne by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. The receiving organisation must cover the remaining 25 percent of the costs from its own funds. For this we would like to ask the volunteers for their support. We therefore suggest that volunteers ideally contribute to the costs of the voluntary service with a personal contribution. We would be happy to help you set up a support group!

*Do I have to provide my own contribution already before the volunteer service?*

No - because the own contribution is not an obligation to participate in the *weltwärts* programme. Volunteers have time to take care of their own contribution during the entire service and beyond. However, we are happy if someone makes the effort to collect donations before leaving the country, as experience shows that it is easier when you are still in India and have the opportunity to talk to people. In addition, many high costs such as flight or insurance are incurred especially at the beginning of the voluntary service.

## Place of Assignment

*What kind of places of assignment exist?*

Right now the DIZ has around ten places of assignment but the number of vacancies varies every year according to the length of the service done by the volunteers before you. They are in the social, administrative, religious and academic field.

## Pocket Money

*Do I get money for my volunteer service?*

Volunteers receive every month 100 EUR pocket money.

Please note: the pocket money - like the reimbursement of expenses - will be transferred to a current account of the volunteers in Germany. Therefore, you will have to open a bank account after your arrival. A transfer to a credit card account is not possible! A transfer to third parties (including parents) is not allowed!

## Public Transport and Traffic

*Are there many differences between Indian and German Traffic?*

The main difference is that in Germany, vehicles drive on the right side. Aside from this, major differences include the fact that right of way belongs to the pedestrian but one should wait for the walk sign before attempting to cross a street. Patience is key and running across a busy street is not ideal. Many people will

also wait for a walk signal even in the middle of the night when there isn't a vehicle in sight - this is optional. Smaller towns will be particularly disapproving if you do not respect the road signs, and it is preferable to wait for the green signal if there are small children in the vicinity.

If you're attempting to cross a street that does not have a walking signal, generally vehicles will stop to let you pass first. This is not applicable when crossing train tracks or tram lines.

### *Can I use all trains, buses and trams?*

Volunteers receive a ticket for the local public transport that is needed for getting from their home to their place of assignment.

The kind of ticket a volunteer receives depends on the place of assignment. In Hesse most of the volunteers travel on a "Hessenticket" through the whole county. In Berlin, the ticket is only valid for Berlin. In Heidelberg the monthly ticket covers Heidelberg and its surroundings – hence, tickets and availability vary.

### *Are there discounts or general price differences between the different means of transport?*

#### **Train**

The German train system covers the entire country and is a good way of getting around quickly. The main provider for trains is the "Deutsche Bahn", however many private organisations also operate trains and use the track network. If a ticket is bought (online or at the station) usage of private operators is allowed as well as the Deutsche Bahn.

Public transport does not run all night through at all the places! Volunteers must make sure beforehand to check if they still come home. During certain hours, trams and trains will be less frequent and buses might be better connected.

If you intend to travel a lot, it might be worth buying a BahnCard 25 which provides 25% discount on the ticket's price. A BahnCard 25 costs 41.00 € for one year. Sometimes it is possible to test the BahnCard for 3 months. This normally costs 15.00 €.

There is a DB App which is very handy. Some states also have a more local app for public transport that will provide details of connections to take and timings of trains/trams/buses within the area, for example the app in Hessen is "RMV", and the one in Berlin is "VBB". These are extremely helpful.

#### **Bus**

A good alternative for catching the train may be to use long-distance buses. This form of travelling may be a bit slower (and depends on the traffic), but it is cheaper and sometimes more direct, because other routes are covered than by the Bahn.

#### **Taxi**

Taxis are really quite expensive (a ride of 15 km costs about 18.00 €). Many cities also have "Sammeltaxis". They operate a bit like normal busses and can be called. One ride costs about one Euro more than a bus ticket (about 3.00 €).

## Riding a Bike bicycle

Riding a bike is (in most cities and towns) a fast and easy option to go from one place to another, it is often a lot easier and more flexible to get around than catching a bus. Of course, this only applies to relatively short distances. If you see walking paths which are paved in two colours, it normally means that one half is meant to be used by cyclists (generally the one closer to the street). Normally, there should also be a sign. It states that walkers and cyclists are allowed to use the path. If no such sign can be seen, you must ride on the street. Furthermore, it is important to note that technically cyclists have to follow the same rules as car drivers (always staying on the right, priority to the right, minding traffic signs etc.). Do try to stay on the right-hand side, though.

### *How about travelling within Europe?*

As soon as you get your residence permit for Germany, you will also receive a visa for the Schengen-area. This encompasses all member states of the European Union, except Great Britain and Ireland. You have to obtain a conditional e-Visa for Turkey as holder of the National D visa in Germany.

## Reimbursement of Costs

### *Which costs are normally covered?*

In principle, the costs of travel to and from the accompanying seminars (preparatory, interim and follow-up seminars), the costs of public transport during the seminars, accommodation and meals during the voluntary service, the costs of an introductory language course in Germany, the costs of health insurance as well as liability and accident insurance in accordance with the guidelines. In addition, the international flights and, if necessary, national flights to the places of assignment as well as the professional and pedagogical support by the sending and partner organisation from the selection to the sending and follow-up.

### *What costs do I have to put down? What do I have to consider when filling out the reimbursement form?*

You may have to disburse some costs (monthly travel, material for language classes, visa costs for renewing the visa) and will have to complete the reimbursement form. Please always keep the original receipts!

## Security

### *Travelling in Germany – am I safe travelling?*

As long as volunteers take the public transport travelling is safe. Hitchhiking should be avoided and it is generally not advisable to move around places unsafe in the evenings or at night (red light district etc).

## Seminars

*Which seminars are offered? Are the seminars obligatory?*

The DIZ organizes three obligatory seminars for *weltwärts* volunteers:

- Preparation seminar
- Interim seminar
- Returnees seminar
- Political seminar (organised by the central educational centres)

The preparation seminar takes place in India before the departure and includes organisational matters (visa application etc.) as well as the preparation for the conditions in Germany. The participants will receive the seminar plan in advance. The interim seminar takes place during the voluntary service in Germany and serves to discuss the situation together and to deal with challenges and problems. During the returnee's seminar the participants should reflect on their experiences and find ways to pass on their newly acquired knowledge as multipliers in India. All seminars are obligatory. It is not possible to leave the country without participating in the preparatory seminar. If you cannot attend individual seminar days for any reason, these must be made up for, otherwise no *weltwärts* certificate can be issued.

## Shopping

*Where can I go shopping? For example, food or clothes?*

### Food

Unlike in countries further to the south, the cheapest food in Germany is to be found in the supermarkets while on the street markets food is usually more expensive. Having said that, fruits, vegetables and meat on the street are locally produced while a large amount of food in the supermarkets is imported. Supermarkets usually open from 8 am till 10 pm (or longer), while the markets vary between 6 am till 1 pm and 6am till 6pm.

### Clothes

While there are many really cheap brands from which you can buy cheap clothes throughout the year and for all seasons (handmade by children workers), we definitely recommend checking out flea markets. There are even designated flea markets for women/girls and though they want an entry fee, normally it pays off as you can find there everything you need (or don't need) – plus, it is much more sustainable than buying anything new.

### Cosmetics / Hygiene Products

Most of the supermarkets have a small assortment though it is recommended to look for drugstores (more products, better prices) like DM, Rossmann, Müller, etc.

### Medicine

Medicine available on prescription is only available at pharmacies.

### Technical Stuff

There are different big stores just dealing with software and hardware (e.g. Saturn, Media-Markt, Konrad).

## Stay in Germany

*Can I stay in Germany after my volunteer service?*

No. Your visa is restricted to your service and therefore also your stay in Germany.

## Target Group

*I do not have Indian nationality - am I still allowed to do a voluntary service through the weltwärts programme?*

This is possible as long as you can prove a permanent right of residence in India and the DIZ has received the approval of the coordination office weltwärts for the assignment.

## Vacation

*Can I take a break during my volunteer service?*

Every volunteer has at least 20 working days off during his or her service of 12 months (not including Saturdays). Some volunteers work at institutions with regular vacation times and are obliged to align their vacation with the places of assignment. On any account, days can only be taken off in accordance with the place of assignment. **The 20 working days off are not to be counted additionally but within the days of regular vacation of the place of assignment!**

## Visa

*What kind of visa do I need?*

Volunteers will need a national visa D for their stay in Germany. For this visa they will receive many documents from the DIZ, but it is on them to organise an appointment with the German consulate at the respective city in India.

Your Visa Documents	Explanation	Action	Additional Action
BFD-Vereinbarung (Präambel...)	BFD Contract	Sign and take with you to the consulate	Scan the whole document and mail to DIZ
Zusatzvereinbarung	Supplementary Agreement to the BFD contract	Sign and take with you to the consulate	Scan the whole document and mail to DIZ
3 Begleitschreiben (DIZ; Engagement Global und Einsatzstelle)	3 Accompanying letters (DIZ; Engagement Global, Place of Assignment)	Take with you to the consulate	

BMZ Visumbegleit-schreiben	Accompanying letter from the BMZ	Take with you to the consulate	
Versicherung Dr. Walter	Health Insurance	Take with you to the consulate	

## Visits

*Can friends or family visit me during my stay in Germany?*

Friends or family visits are welcome during your stay but have to be financed by them or yourself. During the first two months volunteers are asked to not be visited as this is the time when you are supposed to integrate into the project and your assignment.

## weltwärts

*What is weltwärts anyway?*

The development volunteer service *weltwärts* was founded in 2008 by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). Since then, more than 34,000 volunteers have been sent from Germany and dedicated themselves to development projects. Since 2013 young people from partner countries have also been able to do development volunteer service in Germany. By the end of 2017, 1,381 young people had made use of this opportunity.

*weltwärts* focuses on joint intercultural learning. The funding by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) has given all interested young people between the ages of 18 and 28 the opportunity to participate in the learning service. The majority has just finished school and completed their A levels (Abitur). They volunteer for six to 24 months at a local partner organisation in education, health, environment, agriculture, culture or human rights. They are integrated in the partner organisation, support the employees in their work and gradually assume their own responsibilities. The volunteers gain experience abroad and acquire knowledge of the language and personal competencies. After their service, the returning volunteers continue to dedicate themselves to development work in their homelands. As a result, they bring their experiences back to society and make a personal contribution to a fairer world through their assignment abroad.

The places of assignment benefit from the fact that young people who are interested in development subjects and cultural exchange support their projects with their own experiences and points of view. In addition to the practical work during their service, the volunteers often also support the projects to which they were assigned after their return, for example, by providing information or collecting donations.

Besides the volunteers, roughly 180 active sending organisations and numerous partner organisations in the countries of assignment are the main actors at *weltwärts*. They implement the programme in close collaboration and make a considerable contribution to its design.

Since 2012, *weltwärts* has been combined with other institutions, programmes and initiatives in domestic development work under the umbrella of Engagement Global gGmbH. Engagement Global forwards the subsidies to the sending organisations in Germany and advises them on the implementation of the programme.