

International longterm voluntary service with Friedenskreis Halle e.V.
 profile place of assignment
 within the program: weltwärts, EVS



Friedenskreis Halle e.V.

www.friedenskreis-halle.de

Friedenskreis Halle e.V. ("Peace Circle Halle r.a.", r.a. = registered association) is a non governmental organisation in the field of peace politics and peace education located in Halle, Germany.



Background and goals

The experience of the non-violent political changes in 1989/1990 in eastern Germany and eastern Europe, awoke the hope in many people, that a society without violence, a Germany without military and a world without war could become possible. These goals brought together people from different citizen initiatives of Halle in 1990 in the Friedenskreis. In 1991 the association was founded.

Contents

We have a dynamic understanding of peace: We do not understand peace as a state of affairs, not as a far-off goal and not as just as the absence of war. To us peace is a path towards a cooperative, fair and non-violent living together in diversity by which self-fulfilment and freedom of each individual become possible.

Basic themes and guiding values of our work are: active non-violence, constructive as well as civil conflict management, living democracy, transcultural diversity and global justice.

Organisation, Structure and Offers

The work of the association is supported by paid staff and volunteers as well as public/project funding and donations/sponsoring.

The association works in three areas:

1. *peace politics*: actions, campaigns, exhibitions, presentations, lectures and workshops next to local and regional networking
2. *Peace education*: own workshops, seminars and trainings in Halle, the region and abroad in cooperation with local to international partners next to mediation of offers and trainers
3. *Peace services – international voluntary service*: consultation and information for interested persons and organisations next to hosting, sending and coordinating within „weltwärts“ and „European voluntary service“

Next to and within these areas we host structure- and model-projects.

Last but not least we are operating the peace library Halle.



In the realm of Incoming, Friedenskreis Halle e.V. operates as coordinating organisation and place of assignment.

Field of engagement and activities of the volunteer within place of assignment

The voluntary service at this poa mainly is office work and educational work with children, youth and adults.

The volunteer will mainly support the area “Peace education” inclusive attached projects.

The focus of our educational work, especially the work on political development and civil conflict management abroad, lies on schools and nurseries.

Activities of the volunteer:

- supports the area's coordination (documentation, administration/finances, public relations work, research work etc.)
- participating and supporting workshops, seminars and trainings
- developing their own project
- supports the activities of the office and the association (office communication, general public relations work, organization of events and festivals etc.)
- participating in team activities (team meetings, team days etc.)

Please be aware:

- **It's only a 3-days-poa!! - Next to this poa, the volunteer will work 2 days a week in another place of assignment. Currently this is the “Pflanzgarten” of the Franckesche Stiftungen.**
- Lots of – sometimes dull – office work (PC!)
- Good German is very helpful if not essential ...

Volunteer profile – Specific for this place of assignment

- good knowledge of English (spoken as well as written language)
- willingness to also do paperwork
- interest in working with children and young people
- interest in peace related issues and post/colonial theory

Volunteers profile – General

- 18 to 28 years (for the weltwärts programme exceptions can be made, when reasonable) resp. 18 to 30 years (EVS);
- (high) school graduation or comparable personal suitability;
- basic knowledge of English and willingness to learn German starting in the home country;
- motivation for doing a voluntary service as an opportunity to acquire knowledge in different fields and to get involved with (civil) society (voluntary service and peace service);
- openness to the special structure of a voluntary service with Friedenskreis Halle, that is: willingness to participate in the accompanying educational program, to develop and implement one or more small project(s) and to get occupied and engaged with topics and activities of (local) civil society;
- interest in European (EVS) resp. global (weltwärts) relationships and peace politics as well as education on these topics;
- preferably prior dedication to civil society in the home country and willingness to get involved in civil society work in the home country upon returning.

Reports of former volunteers

Sandra, 2016-2017

Hello, I'm Sandra from Macedonia. I arrived in Halle four months ago, in September 2016. Halle is a small beautiful city where one can meet a lot of interesting people and as well enjoy a variety of events. In all time period I spent here, one of the most amusing areas is my working place. When I say amusing, I mean it is challenging and dynamic. Because this letter is mostly related to my working experience, I will stick to the subject of writing.



I have two places of assignment. One is the head Office of Friedenskreis e.V., where I spend three days, and the rest two days of the working week at the Pflanzgarten (Botanical Garden). At the beginning I find everything challenging, which I think is pretty normal for every foreigner. Especially because this was my very first time in Germany and I didn't actually know what to expect. But as time passed, I discovered the right direction. The first month was an adaptation period where I met all the colleagues and was introduced to the obligations. From this point on my presence started to have sense. Mainly I work with the promotion material of Friedenskreis, designing and preparing documents, meanwhile I offer my help wherever needed. That means, if someone of the colleagues need some task to be done, I'm there.

The next is generally content of one of my working days at FK.

In the morning hours, around 10, most of the employees are in the office, starting the day with a cup of coffee, then at 12:30 we start the "Mittagessen" when we gather and share a moment of relaxation and homemade food. After the short break people go back to finish their daily tasks. Almost everyone at FK follows this rhythm. I still learn the rhythm:). Meanwhile many things happen beside the work at the office. I often go home and work from there because of the lack of software at the office. This makes the day more dynamic. Such a freedom makes me feel that I have gained mutual trust and support from the members of FK. Most of the tasks are connected to designing processes, exploring different shapes and colors suitable for the actual project. Beside the design, I have responsibility to attend to the meetings which are happening every second Tuesday where we discuss work from previous days. I learned a lot of new things as well, like sharing with and caring about people around me. This happens the first three working days, and the rest of the week I spend, as I mentioned, at Pflanzgarten.

Pflanzgarten is a botanical garden, where the biology classes are held by Frau Jäger. The classes are combined with 6-10 years old children, a curious little creature, which are still in a deep connection with nature. The way Frau Jäger teaches is interactive education, through practice, cooking and planting different kinds of plants and flowers. I help with the program of the day, for example. If the children are planting I'm planting, if they are cooking, I'm cooking as well. My role is to be part of the children and the teacher, do and watch. I simply enjoy the time spent there learning and refreshing my memory about nature.

Beside all pleasant feelings I experience here in Germany, there is, of course, a part which is not so "awesome". The biggest reason for that is I am here, far from home. Experiences are not consistent only of beautiful moments, there are also scary moments. The most scary for me is socialization, especially in the way I feel the language barriers. I don't speak German, this makes me feel weak, but here is the other side. The challenge! Accept it and one day this will bring fruits and you'll be grateful. This is constantly in my mind. Every day I learn something new, some new words, try to understand and then

to speak. During the day, after work, I mostly go to the other apartment next to me and spend some hours with my people. The other volunteers. We talk, exchanging experience and stories of our days, making plans for future...Simply we use our time in no rush, like a observants. Please this should not give you a wrong image, we are pretty much active :) What ever opportunity comes, we grab it. It is always about self motivation.

There is a lot to say about these past four months volunteering. I just tried to put the most relevant things which I suppose will help you to understand how this reality influences the life of young foreigner.

Nina, 2015-16

My voluntary service in Germany began in October 2015. After being told that I was accepted for the position I applied for at the end of May 2015, I had a little over four months to dream about and imagine my one year in Halle. Around two weeks before coming to Halle, I was told that I will have a possibility for a second place of assignment, that is, besides working in the office of Friedenskreis, two days per week I will be engaged in a botanical school garden. The thought of working with kids and being surrounded with plants was something I could imagine myself doing for a year. Therefore, I accepted the offer, hoping I made the right choice. With the two places of assignment, my working week in Halle looks approximately like this: from Monday to Wednesday I go to the office of Friedenskreis where I normally work for 6 hours (sometimes longer), with the work times being quite flexible. The atmosphere in the office has been giving me positive vibes ever since the day I first stepped in it. The feeling of being warm welcomed I owe to all my colleagues, who helped me integrate faster in the Friedenskreis society. Thursdays and Fridays are the two days of the week reserved for the botanical garden. In the Pflanzgarten I start working at 8:00 am and finish working at 2:00, sometimes 2:30 pm. My responsibilities in the two work places differ quite a lot, which makes this experience for me that more interesting and diverse. In the office I normally do translation works, I write texts, do research and paper work to help some of my colleagues when needed and I am responsible for the organizational part of some events and youth exchanges. Throughout working in the office, I learned how to communicate on a more official level in yet another foreign language, just by reading and responding to all the e-mails I receive on a daily basis. However, what I am most grateful for this year, is the possibility that was given to me to develop my own workshops in both of the places of assignment and present it both in English and German. Though completely different, the topic of my two workshops had to do with my home country. I was very happy to present my country the best I could in front of people, some of whom have never heard about Macedonia. In the process of making a research, I myself found out a lot about my country that I never knew before, for which I am grateful to the people who helped me the most – my tutor Agnes from Friedenskreis and my boss in the botanical garden – Frau Jäger.

The biggest challenge for me in both of the places of assignment right from the start of my voluntary service was the language. What I remember being a little bit uncomfortable for me during the first couple of months in Friedenskreis, were the lunch breaks. In Friedenskreis we always eat together and the lunch break normally starts at 12:30. We gather in one room, which is either mine and Margit's office or the common meeting room (in German- Versammlungsraum). During our lunch it seemed to me that all my colleagues were talking very fast and at the same time, always laughing (which indicated that they were sharing some personal/funny stories). This made me feel a bit frustrated for not being able to laugh along and learn more about the lives of the people that surrounded me. However, since the language was also my biggest motivation for coming to Halle in the first place, this drastically changed during the second half of the year. Now that my German has improved, I no longer feel frustrated and sad.

In the Pflanzgarten I started speaking German with my boss and the other colleagues right from the start. There were moments when I was told to bring some tool from the glasshouse, and I would bring a completely different one instead, but those were situations that now evoke nice memories in me. To my colleagues in the botanical garden I owe the enrichment of my vocabulary with more specific terms.

After my personal experience with having and breaking language barriers, I am even more assured that learning the speaking language of the country you're doing voluntary service in, can only bring you closer to its society and the people around you.

Life in Halle has been treating me very well ever since the first day I came here. After eleven full months of doing voluntary service in Halle, I have the feeling that every single day has paid off. I learnt so much and met so many nice and cool people, which leaves me in no doubt that I made the right decision.

For me this year was all the people I met and will never forget, it was all the kindness I experienced, all the love I gave and received, all the things I learned, speeches I made, speeches I heard, things I've seen, places I've been to, all the times I was surprised and all the times I surprised, all the smiles I provoked and all the good times I had... This was a wonderful year!