

National Profile

Germany



2020-2021

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“ICJA volunteer exchange worldwide contributes to practical peace work and supports societal and political involvement through international exchange and intercultural education.”

Introduction

Dear future volunteers,

In our National Profile, we would like to give you an impression of the country that you either are thinking about choosing or that you already chose for your exchange year.

We want to give you an idea about the historical developments that shaped the country as well as giving you information on current issues regarding German society, politics and culture.

We want to provide you with some information on Germany which you probably did not expect when thinking about coming to our country.

We also want to inform you about the general framework of doing a voluntary service in Germany and let you have a glimpse into what might be waiting for you here in Germany.

We want to make you curious about coming here and making your own experiences, and we are looking forward to sharing them with you!

Reading through this information you will probably notice that we do not go deeply into each topic, but rather try to touch different aspects and provide you with links and references so that you will be able to pursue the issues that you are personally especially interested in.

We hope you enjoy reading through this National Profile and we are looking forward to welcome you and answer all your remaining questions after we have picked you up at the airport in Germany!

See you soon!

The ICJA staff

Geography



The Federal Republic of Germany is located right in the centre of Europe. Its neighbours are numerous: Denmark in the North, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg and France in the West, Austria and Switzerland in the South as well as Poland and the Czech Republic in the East.

With your visa for Germany, you can visit all of these countries without having to apply for another visa. They are all part of the Schengen Agreement that abolished border controls between the participating states, which are most of the EU member states and some other countries such as Norway and Switzerland, while at the same time strengthening police cooperation between the participating states.

Link with more detailed information:

Federal Foreign Office (2012): The Schengen Agreement and the Convention Implementing the Schengen Agreement.
Available at: <http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/EN/EinreiseUndAufenthalt/Schengen.html>



Climate

One thing can be said about the German climate: it is never boring! The weather changes with the seasons and at its extremes, the temperature can vary between 35 degrees Celsius in August to minus 15 degrees in January.

However, in general the meteorologists who classify the German climate as temperate are right: the weather tends to be slightly chilly and rainy for much of the year. For roughly six months, it is cold, for around two months, it is warm, and the rest of the time, particularly in April, the weather is very unpredictable.

If you come from a climate zone where the weather is mostly the same all-year round, the seasons in Germany can catch you by surprise!



History

The foundation of the German Empire and colonisation

At the beginning of the 19th century, after the Napoleonic Wars and the Congress of Vienna in 1815, Germany consisted of numerous sovereign states, which were in most instances ruled by royal families. German nationalism grew rapidly and had different shapes. Noteworthy are the failed or suppressed **German revolutions of 1848**, which swept across Europe. These were popular protests and rebellions against autocratic political structures in the German states. Even though working class elements demanded more radical changes, they partly cooperated with middle class circles, who voiced their desires for political freedom, democracy and nationalism. In the end, both were defeated by the conservative aristocracy. Nationalistic tendencies then shifted and Prussian leaders sought a conservative, Prussian-dominated Germany. Three major wars against Denmark, Austria and France contributed to rising conservative nationalism and led to the unification of the German states. The King of Prussia became the "German Emperor". The majority of the population spoke German as their first language, but several minority languages such as Polish and French existed alongside.

After the middle of the 19th century, Germany had industrialized rapidly. With unification, it became a major power in Europe with a very strong army as well as navy. It engaged in aggressive foreign policies within Europe and abroad. From the late 1880, the German Empire took part in European **colonisation of the global South**. It occupied territories in Africa, China and in the South Pacific, which were five times as big as the German Empire. "German East Africa" constituted the largest colony and encompassed parts of present-day Tanzania and Kenya plus Rwanda and Burundi. In the course of violent colonisation, hundreds of thousand people were killed or died because of inhumane policies. German colonialism was supported by the great majority of Germans and was essential for the proliferation of racist mind-sets, policies, and laws.

Literature and Links:

Ronald Speirs and John Breuilly (eds.) (2005) Germany's two unifications: anticipations, experiences, responses. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Sara Friedrichsmeyer (ed.) (2001) The imperialist imagination: German colonialism and its legacy, Michigan: University of Michigan Press

Susanne Zantop (1997) Colonial Fantasies. Conquest, Family and Nation in Precolonial Germany, 1770-1870, Durham-London: Duke University Press.

Reinhart Kößler (2006) "Awakened from colonial amnesia? Germany after 2004". Available at <http://www.freiburg-postkolonial.de/Seiten/koessler-colonial-amnesia.htm>.

World War I

The **First World War** began with the assassination of the Austrian archduke, Franz Ferdinand of Austria and his wife, on 28th June 1914 by a Yugoslavian nationalist. Even though the murder was the direct trigger, the following war was not about the death of a royal couple, but caused by strong nationalism, and the hunger for power over markets and world politics. Colonial rivalry had led to an arms race between Britain and Germany, which worsened their relations

and led to greater naval co-operation between Britain and France, and in 1914 culminated in war.

On August 1st, 1914, the German Reich declared war on Russia – a war that later engaged almost the whole world and caused the death of more than 17 million people.

At first the war involved the formation of the Triple Alliance Germany, Italy and Austro-Hungary (who in 1882 agreed to support each other if attacked by either France or Russia) who fought on one side, and the Triple Entente (based on an agreement in 1907) including France, Great Britain and Russia fighting on the other. In the order of events, the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria joined the aggressors, while Italy, Japan, Portugal, Romania, Greece and the USA unified with the Triple Entente. Even though the First World War was a war that only served European interests over political and economic power, it impelled the people of the colonies as well and caused great losses of human lives – especially of colonial soldiers who were treated badly and sent into very risky and dangerous battles as cannon fodder.



Bundesarchiv, Bild 146-2007-005
Foto: Marzola, L. | 1918

In November 1918 the war came to an end and the four major imperial powers – the German, Russian, Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires – had been defeated and had ceased to exist. After the loss of the First World War, Germany's military and monarchical elite established the **"stab-in-the-back"-legend**, which became popular especially within right wing circles. The legend implies that the loss of the war was not due to military but rather to domestic political defeat, and tried to blame Social Democrats, Communists, Bolsheviks, and Jews. These groups were marked as internal traitors working in the interest of foreigners, who had allegedly betrayed the German nation.

Literature:

Tina Campt et al. (2001) Blacks, Germans, and the Politics of Imperial Imagination, 1920-60, in: Sara Friedrichsmeyer et al (eds.), *The Imperialist Imagination. German Colonialism and its Legacy*, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 205-30.

Christopher Clark (2012) *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914*. London: Allen Lane.

Weimar Republic

In 1918, rebellions broke out across Germany amongst sailors, soldiers and workers and they elected their own councils in the spirit of the Russian Revolution. The revolts spread across Germany and elites and middle classes feared a communist revolution. The revolution was, however, bloodily put down by amongst others right-wing paramilitary units. The Weimar Republic emerged from these tumultuous times and the new constitution was adopted in 1919 in Weimar. For the first time, Germany had become a **parliamentary democracy**. In this context, women also managed to attain the right to vote. The Weimar Republic was faced with numerous problems in its fourteen years of existence. It was hit hard by the economic crises of

the early and late 1920s (hyperinflation and the Wall Street Crash). Moreover, there were attempts by right-wing groups to take over power. The Weimar Republic was also replete with revisionist elements that wanted the colonies back that Germany had lost in the course of the Treaty of Versailles after World War I. At the same time, the 1920s saw a cultural boom ("the golden twenties"), which included innovative fashion, art, theatre, cabaret and jazz.

Literature:

Eberhard Kolb (2005) *The Weimar Republic*, London/New York: Routledge.

Thomas Mergel (2011) Dictatorship and Democracy 1918-1939. In: Helmut Walser Smith (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Modern German History* pp. 423-452. (available on google books)

The Third Reich, World War II, and the Holocaust

At the beginning of the 1930s, the National Socialist Party had become the strongest party in the German parliament and in January 1933, Adolf Hitler was appointed chancellor. Even though the constitution of 1919 officially continued to exist, the legal measures taken by the Nazi government meant that it could legislate contrary to the constitution. 1933 can thus be seen as the end of the Weimar Republic and the beginning of the Third Reich. Within a short period, the National Socialists eliminated their political enemies and gained possession of governmental instruments of power. Democracy and pluralism had been completely destroyed without much resistance.

The persecution of people perceived as enemies of Germany by the Nazis gathered momentum incredibly fast, with support by the majority of Germans. Starting with political enemies like socialists and communists, other people such as homosexuals, homeless, sex workers, people with disabilities, Sinti and Romanies, and Jews were excluded, pursued, incarcerated, and many lost their lives in concentration camps. At the same time, the military was enormously rearmed and with threats and military aggression, the Nazis managed to achieve an almost complete revision of the Treaty of Versailles from the Western powers England and France before the beginning of World War II. Because German society had never properly dealt with the reasons and its responsibility for World War I, right-wing, militaristic and nationalistic propaganda was appreciated by many Germans.

After England and France had accepted the annexation of Austria as well as that of parts of Czechoslovakia in 1938, the supremacy of Germany in Central Europe became difficult to stop. When Germany took over the rest of Czechoslovakia, England and France promised Poland, which was likely to be Germany's next target, their support. On 1 September 1939, Germany launched war on Poland. Subsequently, England and France declared war on Germany. Within a year, Germany occupied Poland, Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium and France, and attacked the Soviet Union. Italy and Japan allied themselves with Germany, and the USA entered on the side of the Allied forces. The war, however, took place outside Europe as well, since many colonised territories were forced into the war by their occupiers. In 1945, Germany capitulated unconditionally. 55 million people lost their lives in World War II, most of them from the Soviet Union. Victims from Africa, Asia and Oceania are hardly ever mentioned, because they were lumped together with the victims of the colonial powers or they were simply never counted. For instance, approximately 5 million people died in China during World War

II. If civilians were to be included, the number of Chinese victims alone may even surpass 10 million.

Particularly gruesome and exceptional was the **persecution and extermination** of Jews and other people, who were not considered „Aryan”, in Germany and in the countries it occupied. The „Aryanisation” of the population in Germany and the conquered areas was one of the main aims of the National Socialists. Particularly Jews were excluded from all spheres of public life and they were dispossessed. On November 9th 1938, the so-called “Night of the Broken Glass”, many Jewish shops, synagogues and houses were destroyed and thousands of Jews were deported to concentration camps. At the “Wannsee Conference”, which took place in 1942, the National Socialists laid down the plans for the deportation and extermination of the entire European Jewish population. Immediately after the Wannsee Conference, Auschwitz and other large concentration camps in Eastern Europe were transformed to so called extermination camps. On a daily basis, thousands of Jews were deported, tortured and killed on the way to and in these camps. More than six million people (Jews, Sinti and Romanies, Slavics, political opposition members, disabled, Jehovah's witnesses, homosexuals, sex workers and others) were murdered. The majority of Germans knew about and either actively supported it or let it happen.

Literature and links:

For more information on the Holocaust, visit the homepage of Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority: www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/holocaust/about/index.asp

Elie Wiesel (2006) Night, London: Hill & Wang. (Translated from the French 1959 edition)

Ian Kershaw (1991) Hitler. Harlow, Essex: Pearson Unlimited.

Rainer Werning (2002) „Only Bullets Don't Differentiate between Blacks and Whites”

The Third World in World War Two. D+C Development and Cooperation No. 6, p. 28-30. Available at http://www.3www2.de/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=61:only-bullets&catid=48:englisch&Itemid=66

Post War Germany between 1945 and 1949

With the so called “Berlin Declaration” the allied powers USA, Great Britain, Soviet Union and France took over government in Germany on 5th June 1945. From that date on the Allied Control Council in Berlin was the highest governing institution on all topics concerning Germany.

At the Potsdam Conference in July 1945, the four Allies agreed on five political principles when dealing with Germany: demilitarization, denazification, decentralization, disassembly and democratization. In addition, Germany and Berlin were divided into four occupation zones, each zone being administered by one of the four powers.

The juridical accounting of the several crimes conducted by the German administration and military during the war was a very complicated theme. Already during the war the allies agreed on a juridical prosecution of the major war criminals. In 1945 a special court was established in Nuremberg. The impeachment processes which were carried out here between 1945 and 1949 were called Nuremberg Trials.

In post-war Germany, the Germans were primarily concerned about their bare existence: housing was extremely scarce, it was impossible to survive on the daily food rations, the black market was flourishing and US-American cigarettes represented the most important currency.

The political difference between the system of the socialist Soviet Union on the one hand and the capitalistic western powers on the other, was rapidly determining the political actions. Due to the fear that in Europe, where many people were suffering from poverty and misery, communism could spread, the Marshall-Plan was established by the United States. This was an immense investment programme to push the European economy. The countries under control of the Soviet Union neglected to be part of the Marshall-Plan and thus the **separation between West and East** grew further not only in Germany but also in Europe. In 1948 the USA, France and England agreed to introduce a new currency, the "Deutsche Mark", in their zones. The Soviet Union reacted with their own monetary reform. This was the first peak of the cold war.

As a consequence, the political separation of Germany was proceeding. In May 1949, the constitutional law came into force. The Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) had thus been founded. In 1949, the Soviet occupation zone concluded the foundation of a separate state. The German Democratic Republic (GDR) was founded as a second German state.

The **denazification** was one of the most important resolutions that came out of the Potsdam Conference, because it was aiming at a political remodeling of German society. The national socialist ideology should be eradicated and its new emergence prevented. In the beginning all powers worked together (e.g. the abolishment of all Nazi-laws and symbols in public life, Nuremberg Trials) but very fast also here the cold war became the determining power to push this process. Thus the denazification of e.g. the administrative institutions was not strictly executed and many Nazis stayed in their positions.

Literature and Links:

<http://www.zukunft-braucht-erinnerung.de/> (in German)

Stefan-Ludwig Hoffman (2011) Germany is No More: Defeat, Occupation and the Postwar Order. In: Helmut Walser Smith (ed.) The Oxford Handbook of Modern German History pp. 593-614. (available on google books)

Norbert Frei (2002) Adenauer's Germany and the Nazi Past. The Politics of Amnesty and Integration. New York: Columbia University Press.

Peter Reichel, Harald Schmid and Peter Steinbach (eds.) (2009): Der Nationalsozialismus - die zweite Geschichte. Überwindung - Deutung – Erinnerung, München. (in German)

The Two German States – Structures and Differences

The most significant constitutional differences between the GDR and the FRG were the party system and the division of powers.

The **German Democratic Republic** (GDR) defined itself as socialistic. It was constitutionally modeled after Marxist-Leninist state ideas and as a democratic unitary state. It was formally founded on 7th October 1949 when its constitution became effective. The GDR was a "one-party state" or "one-party-dictatorship". The parliament, called "Volkskammer", was the formally highest governing body and had the power to elect the government (Ministerrat) as well as the highest court and other institutions. In elections people had no other choice of parties than the state party "Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands" (SED). Thus there was no opposition in parliament. All relevant decisions were made in the highest party institution, the "Zentralkomitee". Thus the parliament had the only function to legitimate political orders

from the "Zentralkomitee". As a result all parliamentary decisions were taken formally in consensus. Moreover the "Volkskammer" had the power to elect and to dismiss the president and the judges of the high court as well as the attorney general. For this reason there was no real division of powers.

Under the influence of the Soviet Union political opposition to the establishment of the new system, quickly became very dangerous. A first peak of the **repression politics** were the events in 1953 when an uprising was violently suppressed and its putative leaders sentenced in show trials. In the situation of the cold war and the struggle of systems fear of infiltration and destabilization of the new state model led to the installation of a very strong intelligence agency – the "Staatsicherheit" (Stasi). In the first 12 years of existence of the GDR more than 2.7 million people fled into the West. Among other (economical) reasons this led to build the Berlin Wall and the complete closure of borders for the inhabitants in 1961. In its whole history the GDR was strongly guided and influenced by the government of the Soviet Union. Any political decision was strictly agreed on with Moscow.

The Basic Law for the **Federal Republic of Germany** was adopted in 1949. This law worked as a constitution although it was proclaimed as being only provisional, since the reunification to one German nation was always a declared goal of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). The FRG consisting of 16 states was designed as a federal, parliamentary, democratic republic with a social market economy.

The Basic Law's content was greatly influenced by the personal experiences its authors had made under the National Socialist dictatorship. In many parts, it clearly indicates that they were trying to avoid the mistakes that had been partly responsible for the failure of the Weimar Republic, for example by making it impossible to change the federal structures of the German state, its democratic and social principles and its separation of powers (Article 20). Article 79, also known as "Ewigkeitsklausel" or eternity clause, also protects Article 1 from ever being changed; Article 1, which states that human dignity shall be inviolable, was written with the atrocities committed by public authorities during the Third Reich in mind.

For more information on the two state systems see the following links:

Federal Republic of Germany:

<http://www.tatsachen-ueber-deutschland.de/en/political-system.html>

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/gm.html>

http://www.bundestag.de/htdocs_e/artandhistory/history/parliamentarism/frg_parliamentarism/index

German Democratic Republic:

<http://www.stiftung-aufarbeitung.de/> (in German)

http://www.bundestag.de/htdocs_e/artandhistory/history/parliamentarism/gdr/index.html

The Basic Law online:

http://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/englisch_gg/englisch_gg.html#p0015

Germany during the Cold War

For forty years, the two German states co-existed in relative stability. This can partly be explained by the international context: the separated Germany was on the front line of the Cold War, and the Great Powers did not have any interest in changing the status quo. This caution especially on the side of the American allies was again and again proven. When all supply lines to West Berlin were blocked off by the Soviet Union in 1948, the Allied established an air supply route (Luftbrücke), flying everything from coals to milk to the isolated city, instead of breaking up the blockade by force on the ground. The Allied again tried at all costs to avoid an armed conflict with the Soviet Union, even when thousands of East Berlin inhabitants took to the streets in a public protest against the East German regime and its Soviet leaders in 1953, who responded with Soviet tanks. Once the East German regime started to build the **Berlin Wall** in 1961, and still there was no action to maintain the freedom of East Germans, the main guideline of American foreign policy towards Germany was clear: the separation of Germany was to be tolerated in order to avoid a war between the Great Powers.

For the new West German democratic state, the Cold War also shaped central parts of their sovereignty. After its foundation in 1949, the Federal Republic was not allowed to have any armed forces – the memory of the Wehrmacht was still too fresh. Security against the threat of an invasion from the East was provided by the Allied forces stationed in West Germany.

With tensions between East and West increasing, the demilitarization of West Germany was however short-lived. An attempt of creating unified European armed forces – including German troops – failed due to a veto by the French Parliament in 1954, but it opened the way to the Federal Republic joining NATO in 1955. With West Germany's membership, the NATO had finished its fundamental shift from being a transatlantic military alliance against German aggression to a strongly anti-Soviet organization.

The Federal Republic's entry into NATO exemplifies the logic of West Germany's foreign policy in the post-war years: by fully integrating into Western political structures, West Germany managed to overcome the stigma of the Third Reich and become an equal state within the Western community. This **strategy of West integration** can also be seen in the early stages of the European Union, where West Germany was one of the leading voices for more integration.

The remilitarization of West Germany was not without consequences, domestically and internationally. As reaction to West Germany's NATO membership, the Eastern Bloc founded their own military alliance, the Warsaw Pact, and thus cemented the division between East and West further.

Literature and Links:

David F. Patton (2001) Cold War Politics in Postwar Germany. Palgrave MacMillan.

Bob Clarke (2007) The Berlin Airlift. Ten tons for Tempelhof. Tempus.

Dietrich Thränhard (1996) Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Neue Historische Bibliothek (in German).

Postwar Society in West Germany until 1968

West German society was deeply divided regarding rearmament. Many argued passionately against remilitarization, with the split also crossing party lines. When in 1958 leaders decided on arming the new Bundeswehr with modern weapons including atomic weapons, public protests erupted that succeeded in a ban of atomic, biological and chemical weapons, which continues until today.

Even after rearmament, West Germany still was constrained in its sovereignty as an independent state. In case of a crisis such as social unrest, the Allied were empowered to take control. The coalition government of Conservatives and Social Democrats (1966-69) therefore wanted to introduce very harsh **Emergency Laws** that would allow the German government to manage internal crises without relying on the Allied to intervene. Protests against the planned Emergency Laws were numerous, as in case of crisis, fundamental rights could be limited and other constitutional rights such as the right to strike were suspended. Besides trade unions, many students – already distrustful of the coalition government and the lack of an effective parliamentary opposition – became active in the protests.

The West German student generation of the 1970s was highly politicized. Reports of American brutality in the Vietnam War and the discrimination against black Americans fought against by the African-American Civil Rights Movement disappointed many people, as the previously idealized USA were seen as role model for the young West German democracy. For left-leaning Germans, the entry of the Social Democrats into a coalition government with the Christian Conservatives also came as a shock and raised fears of authoritarian government, as there was no effective opposition in parliament. Young people searched for new role models, and found them in resistance leaders against Western imperialism, such as Ernesto "el Ché" Guevara, Ho Chi Minh and Mao Tse Tung. Connected to these political aspects the **68er-generation** cultivated a cultural sense of experimentation and liberation, with free love being the motto of many young people.

In West Germany, the 68er generation also started to question their family history, asking about the actions of particularly their fathers during the Third Reich. Up until that time, the Holocaust and the atrocities committed during the Third Reich were not a topic of public discussion, and the past of decision-makers, high-ranking bureaucrats, judges and cultural figures was ignored. A series of murder trials against 22 people who worked at the concentration camp Auschwitz-Birkenau (known as the **Frankfurt Auschwitz Trials**, 1963-1965) put the issue on the public agenda, as did a theatre play accusing Pope Pius XII of not speaking out against the Holocaust (*Der Stellvertreter* by Rolf Hochhuth). Political decision-makers also were under time pressure, as the statute of limitations for crimes committed during the Third Reich would have run out in 1965, but was first extended to 30 years and then abolished completely after heated internal debates within the political parties.

The 1968 Student Movement

In June 1967, the student Benno Ohnesorg was killed by a policeman during protests against the visit of the Shah of Iran. The murder and the subsequent failure of the government to properly manage the investigation led to an organized student-led opposition movement with Rudi Dutschke as one of the prominent figures. Many felt that with the coalition government of the two major parties in power, political opposition had to take place outside of parliament.

When Rudi Dutschke was severely injured during an assassination attempt in April 1969, the tensions in the West German society were high. With its polemic coverage of the assassination attempt and its unhidden contempt of the left-wing student movement, the tabloid BILD and other media outlets of the conservative Springer publishing house escalated already present negative feelings. The anti-authoritarian actions and rule-breaking behaviour of the protesting students created aggression in some parts of German society, and their sympathy for communist ideas was unwelcome in a Cold War-society. After the assassination attempt on Dutschke, student leaders held the aggressive climate created by BILD responsible, and called for a boycott of the newspaper; protesters stopped its delivery vans. Today, there still is a clear hostile climate between the BILD and left wing media and politicians.

In October 1969, the government changed after parliamentary elections. The new coalition of Social Democrats and Liberals under Chancellor Willy Brandt followed the slogan "*Mehr Demokratie wagen*" ("daring more democracy"). Political reforms picked up demands from the student movement, such as lowering the voting age from 21 to 18. With a less conservative government in power, the student opposition movement slowly lost momentum, with many activists choosing careers within public institutions, aiming to reform the system from within. However, parts of the left-wing student movement had been radicalized, rejecting the political system of the Federal Republic on a fundamental level. From 1970 on, the RAF (Rote Armee Fraktion), also known as the **Baader-Meinhof-Gang**, pursued their radical left-wing goals with terrorist attacks and political assassinations. Police raids to catch them and the trials after their incarceration lasted well into the 1980s. In 1998, the RAF officially disbanded.

Political Movements in the 1960s and 1970s

It was not only young people and students who were politically active in the 1960s and 1970s. In 1972, voter turnout was the highest ever in the Federal republic, with 91.1% voting in parliamentary elections. **Citizen's initiatives** organized themselves around local issues such as community work, youths, children's playgrounds and traffic rules. The social-liberal coalition under Chancellor Brandt had a strong drive towards reforms of social and also environmental policies that were not uncontroversial and led to very active public debates. From the mid-1970s on, the willingness to reforms decreased, as priorities under the new Chancellor Helmut Schmidt shifted to economic and international issues, as the oil crises of 1973 and 1979 and Cold War politics shook up international politics.

The issue of **environmental protection** and against nuclear power was taken up by a number of groups and initiatives; in the first well-publicized protest, demonstrators occupied a building site for a nuclear power plant in Whyl in Baden-Württemberg in 1975. Environmental issues and especially anti-nuclear sentiments were not high on the political agenda of the 1970s, where nuclear power was a welcome energy alternative considering the insecurity



of oil supplies after the oil crisis of 1973. In 1980, representatives from different wings of the environmental movement founded a Green political party. With the very conservative members leaving the party after internal arguments already in 1981, and the communist groups leaving in 1990, the party slowly found itself as established part of German politics; today the Green party is called Bündnis 90/Die Grünen.

Under the conservative governments of the 1960s, **women's rights** were subsumed under a patriarchal understanding within the role of women as wives and mothers. Until the law was reformed, women were legally obligated to do the housework, and needed their husband's approval to work outside the family. These unjust and old-fashioned laws as well as others in the areas of divorce and family law were modernized under the principles of equality and self-determination for women, which was met with broad support in public opinion. However, a heated controversy broke out over abortion law. In 1971, the social-liberal government proposed a change to §218 of the Criminal Code that was not far-reaching enough for the women's liberation movement and far too liberal for the CDU/CSU. What followed were years of media storms, legal actions before the Constitutional Court, and a public debate that lasted until a reform of §218 in 1995.

The issue of West Germany's rearmament had divided German society already in 1955, and pacifist groups continued to protest against remilitarization and against the nuclear arms race between East and West, with massive public marches on the Easter holidays becoming their trademark in the 1970s. When the NATO decided in 1979 to deploy US-nuclear missiles in West Germany (known as NATO Double-Track Decision), the public outcry revitalized the **peace movement**. In 1981, 250.000 people marched for peace in Bonn, the capital of West Germany. The peace movement also had links to another very diverse political movement: the movement for solidarity with the Third World protested against poverty, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, and supported opposition movements in Central America.

Literature and Links on the Student Movement and the 1960s and 1970s in West Germany:

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Economic Development and Migration

Despite a difficult start from 1945 to 1950, the West German economy started to grow at such a miraculous speed in the 1950s that Germans speak of a "Wirtschaftswunder" or "Economic Miracle". The rebuilding of industry and infrastructure was partly financed by the US European Recovery Program, better known as Marshall-Plan. Also, West Germans had an urgent need for any kind of industrial goods from fridges and radios to cars that supported the rebuilding of the West German manufacturing industry. But most significantly, the war and the subsequent US intervention in Korea from 1950 on led to a strong international demand for West German products and commodities such as iron and steel, known as "Korea-Boom". By 1960, unemployment in the Federal Republic was practically zero percent.

The West German manufacturing industry as well as the agricultural sector urgently needed cheap workers. The solution: recruiting **foreign "guest workers"** (Gastarbeiter). The West German government signed recruitment agreements with Italy (1955), Spain and Greece (1960), Turkey (1961), Yugoslavia (1968) and several countries outside of Europe such as Tunisia, Morocco and South Korea. The number of foreign workers rose quickly, to 2,6 million in 1973. This migration was never intended to be long-term, as workers were supposed to return to their home countries after a few years of working in German factories; the integration of these millions of foreign workers into German society was therefore not planned and politically not supported. The Christian Conservatives were clear in their opinion: "Deutschland ist kein Einwanderungsland" ("The German Federal Republic is not a country of immigration").

However, the reality already was fundamentally different: many foreign workers had long since moved their families to Germany or founded families. Legally, they stayed foreigners, as did their children and any of their grandchildren even though they were born in West Germany. In most German cities, immigrants clustered together in their own communities, with their own grocery stores, religious centres and social clubs, creating pockets of parallel societies whose members' lives rarely touched the lives of their German neighbours. With rising unemployment, hostility against the perceived foreigners also increased, and in local elections in 1989, right-wing parties won high votes for example in Berlin and Frankfurt.

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Neue Ostpolitik: lessening tensions between West Germany and East Germany

Until the late 1970s, West Germany did not diplomatically recognize the existence of the GDR. Following the Hallstein-doctrine, the Federal Republic also severed official ties with states that began diplomatic relations with the GDR. This changed under Chancellor Willy Brandt and his minister Egon Bahr. They were convinced that German unification could only be reached through cooperation with the Eastern bloc, particularly with the Soviet Union. Accordingly, Brandt started talks with the GDR regarding allowing family visits between the two Germanys as well as opening telephone lines and postal services. He also recognized the German-German borders in the Treaty of Moscow in 1970, thereby easing fears of invasion on both sides. Also, economic relations between the GDR and West Germany were legalized, a step welcomed by the financially stretched GDR.

The Unification of Germany

In the 1980s, the planned economy of the GDR was in crisis. Domestic productivity was low, and the state was in debt. The lack of exports led to scarcity of foreign currency that made imports difficult and together with the low domestic productivity, led to a shortage of all kinds of consumer goods. In other states of the Eastern bloc, the economic situation was similarly problematic. Reforms initiated by the Soviet leader Gorbachov were intended to open the economies to foreign trade and improve productivity. The GDR government refused to participate in the reforms, fearing a weakening of their power and also fearing the emboldened **opposition movements** sweeping its Eastern neighbours that were encouraged by the success of the Polish Solidarnosc union. In the Eastern bloc, movements for social change and for democracy had been slowly growing in strength, with the Helsinki Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in 1975 often being credited for paving the way, as for the first time, it was officially recognized that the treatment of citizens within national borders was a matter of international concern.

As very significant step of the fundamental changes happening within the Eastern bloc, Hungary was the first state to open its borders to its Western neighbour Austria in 1989. Thousands of East Germans then tried to flee to the West through the open border between Hungary and Austria, and hundreds barricaded themselves in the West German Embassy in Prague. In reaction to the increasing pressure on the SED government to take action, the East German civil rights movement called for demonstrations taking place every Monday. Their slogan "We are staying here" was a call for reforms in the GDR and a reaction to the thousands trying to leave the GDR for the West. However, the GDR leaders continued to refuse, until the pressure of millions of East Germans taking to the streets every Monday became too strong and the SED government was forced to resign. Under the new SED government, demonstrations continued. On November 4th, 5000.000 people protested at Berlin Alexanderplatz. On the evening of November 9th, 1989, after a press conference regarding visa reforms, thousands of East Berliners enforced an opening of the Berlin Wall.

After the **fall of the Wall**, masses of East Germans moved to the West. On average, around 2000 people left East Germany every day, reflecting the economic collapse of East Germany as well as the public's lack of trust in its government. Chancellor Kohl's original plan of a slow re-unification process had to be sped up.

**„Wir sind das Volk!
Wir sind ein Volk!“**

(Slogans chanted by protestors on Berlin Alexanderplatz on November 4th, 1989)

After the first free elections in the GDR in March 1990, the newly democratic Volkskammer decided in favour of re-unification with the Federal Republic. On October 3rd 1990, the reunification of the two German states was officially finalized and the Basic Law became the constitutional foundation of the newly united **Federal Republic of Germany**.

Surprisingly, a conservative coalition won the first elections for a joint German parliament, partly because Chancellor Kohl promised "*blühende Landschaften*" ("blooming fields") for the former GDR. The new coalition government under Chancellor Kohl introduced supplemental taxes in order to finance the rebuilding of East Germany, known as the solidarity contribution or "*Soli*". The tax revenues were in large parts invested in improving the run-down infrastructure and to clean up the massive environmental and toxic damages left over by the East Germany industry that made whole areas inhabitable.

The East German factories originally were intended to be administered by a Trust Agency, and then sold to private investors; however, this did not work very well, as very few investors were interested in investing the outdated industrial plants. Most factories instead closed down. Some new industrial plants were built, for example the car manufacturer Opel in Eisenach, but all in all, the rebuilt industry did not have the capacities to offer new work to the millions of workers who lost their jobs. Consequently, unemployment was and still is high in many parts of Eastern Germany. Many workers decided to move to Western parts of Germany, trying to find employment there, while others continue to live in East Germany and work on the other side of the former border, often commuting hundreds of kilometers between home and work, also because salaries continue to be lower in the former GDR.

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Germany and European integration

West Germany's history from 1949 to 1989 very much is a history of „Westintegration“: creating economic and political structures of Western European integration that are built on reconciliation between France and Germany, and a close transatlantic alliance with the United States.

Particularly for the wary France, post-1945 Germany had to be contained in supranational systems of cooperation. When the coal and steel of West Germany's industry was in high demand in the 1950s, fueling its economic „Wirtschaftswunder“, the production of these militarily-relevant resources was in fact controlled by a new Western European organisation,

the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). The ECSC was the beginning of the common European market. West Germany's remilitarization was first to take place within a new Western European Defense Community, and after this attempt of Western European military integration failed, by entry into the transatlantic NATO.

Unsurprisingly, a unified Germany was also only possible within the context of an overarching European structure. In 1992, the **European Union** deepened its political and economic integration with the Treaty of Maastricht. Additionally to economic integration, EU member countries from then on also closely cooperated in foreign and security matters as well as in domestic and criminal policies. But most importantly, the heads of government decided on introducing a common European currency: the **Euro (€)**. This last implied the creation of common policies in fiscal matters and some limitations on national social policies. Today, after three more EU treaties (Amsterdam, Nice and Lisbon), the politics and economies of EU member countries are deeply entwined. Around half of German laws that are passed are based on supranational EU laws, for example in areas such as industry standards, environmental law, trade regulations and competition law.

In the German public, the pro-European attitude of their government was met with a relatively high level of support, for example with around 60% having a positive opinion in the 1980s. This changed in the 1990s, with support for European integration decreasing to between 40-50%, as the question of expanding the European Union to the East was seen very negatively, as was the introduction of the Euro. In fact, political decision-makers underestimated the emotional attachment many Germans had to the Deutsche Mark as symbol for West Germany's successful rebuilding post-1945. Since then, the debt crisis of EU member country Greece and its need for EU loans and securities has led to a public debate about Germany's role and responsibility in the European Union.

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Right-wing radicalism and racism in Germany, in the past and today

After re-unification, many East Germans felt betrayed. Instead of the "blooming fields" promised by Chancellor Kohl, their quality of life was much lower than that of Germans living in Western parts of Germany. Particularly young people with a low educational background

lacked opportunities and suffered from unemployment, poverty and feelings of having been left behind in unification. In this situation of social disintegration and hopelessness, aggressions turned towards asylum-seekers and people with a migration background that were perceived to be competitors for welfare subsidies and jobs. In 1992, **xenophobic riots** in the East German city of Rostock-Lichtenhagen erupted that lasted three days and in which housing for asylum-seekers and an apartment building for foreign workers from Vietnam were attacked. Responsible was a mob of young right-wing extremists, but they were watched and cheered on by around 3000 local onlookers.

Though the best-known right-wing attack in the newly re-united Germany, the riots in Rostock-Lichtenhagen were only one in a line of similar attacks in the early 1990s, both in the East and in the West of Germany. In the former GDR, a violent, racist and anti-Semitic Skinhead-scene had existed since the 1980s. However, attacks against those perceived as foreign were never an exclusively East German phenomenon. Violence against migrants and former guest workers' communities is also an often-ignored part of West German history, and the right-wing parties DVU (*Deutsche Volksunion*) and the Republicans several times managed to enter into local parliaments in West Germany, and even into state parliaments (BaWü, Bremen, Schleswig-Holstein in the 1990s).

Others well-publicized attacks against asylum-seekers were for example in Hoyerswerda in East Germany 1991, as well as in Mölln in 1992 and in Solingen in 1993 (both in the West). The issue of refugees and asylum-seekers had been controversially discussed in the public sphere, because the number of refugees had grown since 1990, partly due to the war in the former Yugoslavia and partly due to the end of the Soviet Union.

Today, more than 20 years after the riots in Rostock-Lichtenhagen, Germany still has a far-right problem. The **far-right political party NPD**, though never successful on a federal level, has an undeniable presence in local communities, particularly in rural areas in the East. Neo-Nazis from the NPD sit on town councils, they are trainers in sports clubs and organize youth activities.

2013 another right-wing party called **alternative for Germany (AfD)** was founded. In the last two years it's national populist and xenophobic program has gained more popularity even on federal governmental level.

Due to the war in Syria and other crisis, the number of displaced people and asylum seekers has increased rapidly in Germany within this year. 2014 the **PEGIDA movement** started demonstrations on a regular bases, mostly in cities in the eastern part of Germany. PEGIDA stands for *patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the occident*. Citizen are supporting this anti-Islamic movement all over Germany which is pleading for more restrictive immigration rules. Several attacks against asylum homes have been observed lately.

Right-wing radicalism has increased since the numbers of displaced persons and refugees seeking for asylum in Germany has increased. The PEGIDA movement, AfD and NPD are considered a danger to the democratic constitution.

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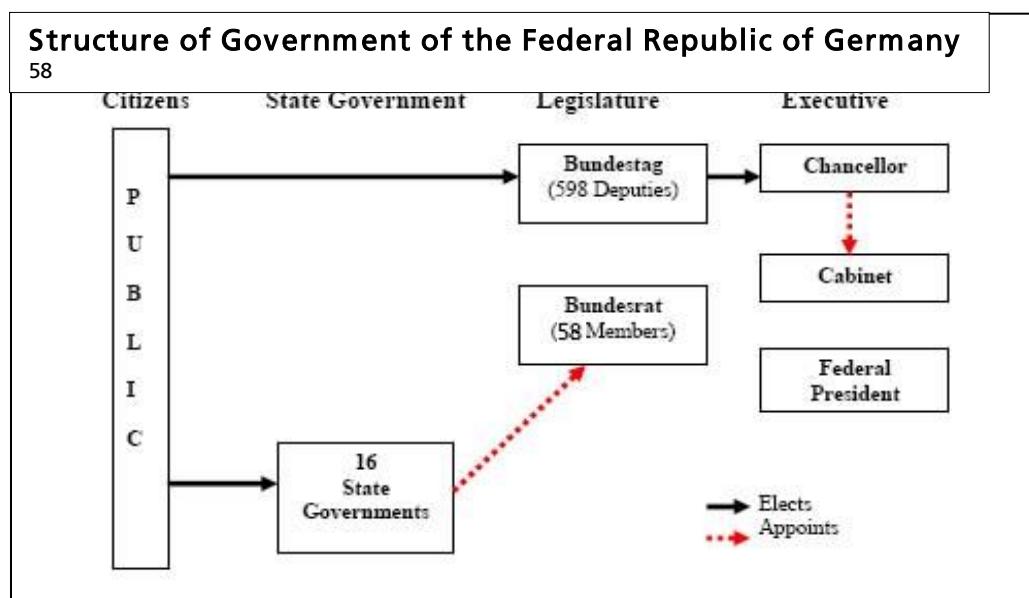
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Political Structures

Germany is a Federal Republic, which means that it is a federation of 16 federal states (*Bundesländer*) that have their own governments and are also their own political representation on the federal level. The political system and constitution of the unified Germany is identical with that of the former Federal Republic of Germany:



Fundamental characteristics of the state

Germany is a republic and a democracy; it is a federal state based on the rule of law, separation of powers and social justice. Public authority ultimately rests with the people, but as Germany is a representative democracy, they have no direct vote in the exercise of that authority, except in elections in which they choose their representatives (MPs or Members of Parliament).

Main Constitutional Bodies

- **The Federal President/*Der Bundespräsident*:** The head of state of the Federal Republic of Germany is the Bundespräsident who is elected every five years by the Federal convention (Bundesversammlung), a constitutional body which convenes only for this purpose. It consists of the House of Representatives (Bundestag) and an equal number of members elected by the assemblies of the Federal States (Bundesländer). The tasks of the Federal President are mainly of a representative nature. He can be re-elected only once. The current Federal President is called Joachim Gauck, and he was elected in March 2012.
- **The House of Representatives/*Der Bundestag*:** The Bundestag is the federal chamber of parliament and is elected by the people every four years. The Bundestag's main functions are to pass laws, to elect the Chancellor and to act as a counterweight to the government. The Bundestag is the place where parliamentary discussions and arguments over policy issues take place. The extensive preparatory work for new legislation is done in the parliamentary committees, whose meetings are usually not open to the public. The last federal elections were in September 2013.
- **The Federal Council/*Der Bundesrat*:** Der Bundesrat represents the sixteen states and participates in the legislative process and administration of the Federation. In contrast to the senatorial system of federal states like the United States or Switzerland, the Bundesrat does not consist of elected representatives of the people but of members of the governments of the states/Länder. More than half of all bills require the formal approval of the Bundesrat.
- **The Federal Government/*Die Bundesregierung*:** The German government consists of the Federal Chancellor (*Bundeskanzler/Bundeskanzlerin*) who is chairman/chairwoman of the Cabinet and head of government, and the Federal Ministers (*Bundesminister*). The Chancellor is in a strong position, primarily due to the fact that it is the Chancellor who determines the guidelines of government policy. Since 2005, the Chancellor is Angela Merkel, member of the conservative CDU (Christian Democratic Union). She has been re-elected twice, at the latest in September 2013.

Political Parties in Germany

There are five major political parties that - through their representation in the national and regional parliaments and governments - shape public policy in Germany. These major political parties are:

- CDU/CSU (conservative Christian Democratic Union and their Bavarian sister party)
- SPD (Social Democrats)
- Bündnis 90/Die Grünen (Green Party)
- Die Linke (left-wing party)

In fact, this dominance of very few large political parties is intentionally engineered by the German constitution: on the federal and at the level of the states (*Bundesländer*), parties need to gain at least 5% of the votes to be able to claim their parliamentary seats.

Besides the major political parties, many other political parties - from extremist parties to parties representing very specific interests - are active in public opinion-making and political discussions.

A very hot political topic is the fact that in some local and state parliaments, the National Democratic Party (NPD) and the Alternative for Germany (AfD) are represented. Both are radical right-wing parties with nationalist and xenophobic views; the federal government, the Bundestag and the Bundesrat tried several times to ban the party NPD as unconstitutional, but so far, all attempts failed.

Overview over German political parties (in English):

<http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/where-do-they-stand-a-quick-guide-to-germany-s-political-parties-a-651388.html>

Collection of articles and background reports on Right-Wing Extremism in Germany (in English):

http://www.spiegel.de/international/topic/right_wing_extremism/

German Society and Culture

The German Language

Today, German is the native language of more than 100 million people. About one in ten books published throughout the world is written in German. However, the German language sounds different in different regions. Dialects, pronunciations and even words can differ greatly: If, for example, a person from Saxony and a native Bavarian were to carry on a conversation in their respective pure dialects, they would certainly have some difficulties understanding each other! For you, this means

that the German you will hear in your host family or your project might not be the exact kind of German you learn in your language classes. But do not worry too much: even though they might speak a dialect at home, almost all Germans also speak the *Hochdeutsch* that you hear on the evening news.

Facts and Figures about Germany	
Inhabitants (2019)	83,1 Million
Language	German
Capital	Berlin
Currency	Euro (€)
GDP (2019)	€ 3,344 Bn
Economic Growth (2019)	0,4%
Share of Foreigners	12,2 %
Population with migrant background	20,8 M

Statistisches Bundesamt, 2019

Churches/Religion

Germany is a secular state. Nevertheless, about 55 million of Germany's 82 million inhabitants belong to one of the Christian churches. Of these, roughly half are Protestants, and half are Roman Catholics, while a minority belongs to other Christian denominations. Generally, church membership has decreased in the last decades, and roughly one third of Germans would describe themselves as being unaffiliated with any religion. Due to historical developments, the prevalence of the **major Christian denominations** shows a regional trend: the South-Western part of Germany (Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg) is predominantly Catholic, while the Northern and the Eastern part of Germany are Protestant. The Catholic and the Protestant church in Germany work closely together in the ecumenical church movement. However, despite membership numbers, church and religion in general play a rather marginal part in everyday life, as only a small part of all church members are actively involved in their church. Regular participation in services is not very common, and for many families, going to Christmas mess is the only church service they attend all year. However, you might also experience that some families keep the tradition of saying a short prayer before dinner.

Besides Christian churches of all denominations, you might also come across Jewish synagogues, Buddhist and Hindu temples and Muslim mosques in German cities, as there are people with numerous confessional backgrounds living in Germany. The two major ones are people of **Muslim faith** (about 4 million) and of **Jewish faith** (about 100.000, in 1945: 15.000). Similarly to Christian churches, Muslim as well as Jewish communities in Germany represent all forms of religious identity, from orthodox to progressive.

Muslim communities, however, are the focus of a decades-old political conflict. Since the migration of Muslim workers in the 1960s and 1970s, their place in German society has been contested by conservative as well as right-wing groups. Clearly showing the ongoing tensions, the building of mosques regularly leads to protests. Particularly the linked right-wing populist

groups Pro NRW and Pro Deutschland agitate against German Muslims, provoking violent clashes between extremists on both sides

Links and Literature:

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Volunteering

Being a volunteer is well-known concept in German society. Around one third of Germans work or have worked as a volunteer, according to a study from 2010. Helping out in sports clubs, supervising a childrens' play group or sitting on local church committees are some of the most widespread activities. In 2011, the German President even recognized volunteers for their commitment with Medals of Honour, and the German government has been very active in recent years to make volunteering attractive for interested people, for example by simplifying the bureaucratic requirements, creating tax breaks and running a publicity campaign advocating in favour of volunteering. Volunteers are irreplaceable for the social sector in Germany. This is not unproblematic, as this means that projects and programmes related to public welfare and social services now depend on people willing to work for free, with the state having withdrawn from areas that formerly were its responsibility.

It is possible that many people you will meet know somebody who is a volunteer. However, your willingness to work for free in a project might also be understood as something completely ordinary, and you might not feel as appreciated as you thought.

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Economy and Social Welfare System

Germany's economy is best known for its strong industrial sector, particularly regarding engineering, car manufacturing and chemical products. Traditional industries such as steel and textiles have lost significance in recent years. Many German workers are organised in powerful

trade unions. One peculiarity of the German economic system are the well-established mechanisms of negotiation between trade unions and the federal and state governments, a system that is known as corporatism. Conflicts between trade unions and the government are therefore mostly dealt with behind closed doors, and strikes are, compared to other countries in particularly Southern Europe, rather rare.

After The Second World War, German socio-economic policies were shaped by the concept of a "social market economy", or "Soziale Marktwirtschaft" (capitalism with a strong social system). Following this concept, a strong economy was supposed to be counterbalanced by an equally strong welfare system, with the government balancing economic and social interests. The way the welfare system in Germany is set up mirrors this link between economy and social policies: the welfare state is – broadly speaking - financed by the wages of employees.

This system of organising a welfare state only works as long as there are enough people working a regular, full-time job as employee of one company. However, for decades, the economic sector in Germany has been changing. Technical innovations have replaced skilled workers with computers, new forms of employment have been developed (part-time work, Leiharbeit, Minijobs) and certain part of manufacturing have been outsourced to low-wage countries with the speeding-up of globalisation. Additionally, the demographic trend shows that less babies are born in Germany, which means that less and less people are going to be in the work force in the future and consequently, the financial contributions to the welfare system will necessarily go down. At the same time, the restructuring of the economic sector has resulted in increased unemployment rates.

The welfare system and the way it is financed are in crisis. Attempts at reforming the welfare system (Hartz 4) and creating new forms of labour to encourage entry into the labour market (Minijobs) have not succeeded in providing long-term solutions.

Poverty in Germany

Contrary to some foreigners' expectations, poverty exists in Germany and does not only concern those who are unemployed, but also those working poorly paid jobs, pensioners and children. Instead of a minimum wage, the German government offers benefits to those who do not earn enough to live despite working, and to those who cannot live on their pension. In September 2013, around 6 million people (9.5%) received welfare benefits, and around 2.8 million people were unemployed and received unemployment benefits (6.6%). This means that more than 15% of Germans depend of social welfare of some kind. Furthermore, around 16% of Germans are at risk of falling into poverty, according to a 2013 study, with women and the aged particularly at risk.

In recent reforms, welfare benefits have been cut to a bare minimum (Hartz reforms in 2005). Originally intended to encourage employment, these cuts have created resentment and frustration, as opportunities to re-enter the labour market are scarce for those disadvantaged by a low education level and few marketable skills. Particularly for young people that left school at age 15 or 16, finding a job or place for vocational training is difficult. Also, it is no longer unusual to see homeless people and beggars on the streets, particularly in bigger cities.

Links:

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Some Highlights of German culture(s)

On **St Martin**, which is November 11th, children meet in the evening with self-made paper lanterns and walk through the streets, singing St Martin's songs. In some regions, there is also a public bonfire on St Martin's eve, and particular foods: St Martin's goose, pastries called *Martinshörnchen*, shaped like croissants or like gingerbread men.

On **Nikolaus**, celebrated on December 6th (St. Nikolaus), children traditionally find chocolates, walnuts, gingerbread and tangerines in their shoes, which are said to be gifts from St Nikolaus. There are also a lot of regional traditions linked to Nikolaus. In many parts of Germany, children dress up in costumes on the eve of December 6th, and ring doorbells asking for sweets, similarly to the American Halloween. In some regions of Germany, the figure of St Nikolaus is traditionally accompanied by Knecht Ruprecht. In many Southern regions such as Bavaria, St Nikolaus is accompanied by one or more dark, devil-like figures known as Krampus, who try to terrify children with their masks and noises; in some regions, the *Krampusse* (a group of people in terrifying masks and costumes) race through the villages on December 5th.



German Christmas is celebrated on December 24th, usually in the circle of your closest family. Traditions again are regionally different and might also depend on the respective family's personal traditions, but generally, families have a Christmas tree in their living room, and after Christmas dinner, the family gives each other presents. On December 25th, families often meet with members of the extended family at lunchtime to eat a Christmas goose.

New Year's Eve, or **Silvester**, is celebrated on December 31st, with huge firework displays at midnight. This is also the only day of the year when starting private fireworks is legally allowed. Silvester in Germany is noisy and colorful, and for young people, often a night they spend at private parties with friends. If you are outside at midnight to watch the fireworks displays, please note that sometimes people start fireworks in the middle of crowds or throw small fireworks at cars or other people.

Public holidays

On public holidays, schools, shops and workplaces are closed. Emergency services are operating, as are shops in train stations as well as in gas stations.

The number of public holidays depends on the federal state you will be living in; in general, there are more public holidays in the South than in the North, due to a number of Catholic public holidays.

Link for more details:

<http://www.holidays-info.com/Holidays-Germany/holidays.html>

Also known as *Fastnacht*, *Fasnet*, *Fasching* or *Fünfte Jahreszeit*/Fifth Season, **carnival celebrations** take place sometime in February to March. The exact dates depend on when Easter takes place, and is counted back from Ash Wednesday, called *Aschermittwoch* in German.



In protestant regions in Germany, carnival is not an important tradition, while particularly in the West and in the South West of Germany (in dominantly catholic regions), carnival is a huge part of local culture and connected with many specific traditions. In those carnival celebrations, particularly in the carnival celebrations in Köln, Düsseldorf, and Mainz one important aim is to laugh and make fun about political authorities.



In the South West the "*Fasnet*" or "*Fastnacht*" in addition to this aim has its roots in more medieval traditions which symbolize the expulsion of the winter by witches, demons and spring spirits (represented in the costumes people are wearing – In the South west, each village has its own "masks").



During carnival, there are public parades taking place in a lot of city centers. And of course, it is always a big party which can take a whole week!

If you are interested in the many varieties of Carnival celebrations, check out these Wikipedia articles, which give a good overview over the different regional celebrations:

In general: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carnival_in_Germany,_Switzerland_and_Austria

Cologne: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cologne_Carnival

Mainz: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mainz_carnival

Black Forest <http://www.schwarzwald-tourismus.info/entdecken/Kultur-Erlebnis/fasnacht>

South West Germany https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schw%C3%A4bisch-alemannische_Fastnacht

May 1st is a public holiday everywhere in Germany (*Tag der Arbeit*/ Labour Day). Traditionally, trade unions organize demonstrations and events, and shops are closed.

German food

Compared to the French or Italians, Germans are not typically known for their love of good cuisine. According to statistics, Germans only spend around 11% of their income on consumer goods such as food, while the Italians for example spend around 14% (Eurostat 2012). This is reflected in how many discount food stores such as ALDI, Lidl and Penny and how many *Imbissbuden*/fast-food counters you will find in any town in Germany. *Currywurst mit Pommes rot-weiß* (*Currywurst* with French fries, with ketchup and mayonnaise), *Döner Kebab* and hamburger seem to be consumed in large numbers.

However, this is only half of the picture. For many German families, eating together is really important. Sharing meals and sitting at one table while eating is a way for family members to connect and communicate before or after a busy day. As host son or host daughter, they will expect you to sit down at the table with the family and eat with them (and help with cleaning the table after the meal). Even if you might not understand all that is said in the beginning, just spending time with your host family in this setting will help you to get to know them and become part of the family. Don't underestimate the importance of participating in German family meals! And the significance of sharing food is not only limited to the family setting. In the work context, for example, a barbecue in summer and a Christmas party with *Lebkuchen* and *Stollen* in December are an important part of work culture.



reading a Sunday newspaper over breakfast.

German foods as such might be slightly unusual and possibly uncomfortable heavy for you. Traditionally, **breakfast consists of bread rolls (*Brötchen*) or bread, eaten with different kinds of cheese, meat and jams**. While in some families, this tradition continues, others only eat some cereal or have just a coffee on weekdays. However, Sunday breakfast still tends to be an elaborate spread of *Brötchen*, eggs, cheeses and jams, and many like to spend one or two hours

Generally speaking, potatoes and bread are staples of the German diet. **Hot meals usually consist of meat or fish with potatoes, pasta or rice, and also some vegetables and often are served only once a day.** Foreign cuisine is also well-liked, particularly Italian dishes and Chinese. However, it is not unusual to eat cold dishes - particularly bread with cheese or *Wurst* - in the evening instead of a hot meal ("*Brotzeit*"). German bread is whole-grain, often bought in bakeries, and exists in many variations with many different kinds of grains and ingredients.

There is an increasing number of vegetarian and vegan people in Germany (around 6 Million!), so it also could be that your host family may have a vegetarian way of cooking and eating.

Facts about ICJA/ICYE Germany

History

The ICYE National Committee in Germany is called "**ICJA Freiwilligenaustausch weltweit**" (ICJA volunteer exchange worldwide). In 1949, ICJA Germany and a partner organization in the United States founded a bilateral youth exchange program with the intention of facilitating reconciliation after the Second World War, motivated by a Christian sense of responsibility and service for humanity. This exchange program was the foundation of what today is the worldwide ICYE federation, with National Committees all around the globe that have agreed on quality standards and rules regarding the program, and that work together in sending and receiving international volunteers.

The Office

The administrative work of ICJA Germany is coordinated by the ICJA office (*Bundesgeschäftsstelle*) that is located in Berlin. The office selects and prepares the German volunteers who go abroad, is responsible for the international volunteers in Germany and keeps in contact with other ICYE committees and the International Office of the ICYE federation, which is also located in Berlin. Every year, ICJA sends around 300 German volunteers abroad and welcomes about 90 international incoming volunteers.

The ICJA Incoming department (**Aufnahme**) is responsible for the organizational context of your exchange year: the Incoming staff search for host families and projects, work with the ICJA regional groups and organize most of your seminars.

You have to be aware of the fact that you might live very far away from the ICJA office in Berlin. This means that you will not be in face-to-face contact with the program coordinators on a daily basis. Therefore, being a volunteer in Germany requires independence and asks for your own initiative to pick up the phone and call the ICJA office in case of difficulties and questions.

Incoming Director	Anja Wolff	awolff@icja.de
Incoming Coordinators	Gabriele Brandt	gbrandt@icja.de
	Marco Antonio Flores Curro	mcurro@icja.de
	Daniel Skoruppa	dskoruppa@icja.de
	Tabea Büge (placement coordinator)	tbuege@icja.de
Administration	Nadine Schröder	nschroeder@icja.de
Apprentice	Ella Schmidt	assistenz-aufnahme@icja.de

ICJA: a Non-Profit Association

ICJA is a non-profit organization, and therefore all revenues and grants are spent in order to operate the exchange programs. Its internal structure is that of a membership association. The ICJA office in Berlin and its staff members are only a small part of a Germany-wide network of members and regional volunteer structures.

Without the commitment and work of its members, ICJA would not exist. They are voluntarily active without getting financial remuneration in all organs and structures of the association: they make policy decisions in committee meetings, represent ICJA at publicity events, and help at seminars. For the Incoming volunteers, the Regional Groups - regionally organized groups of former German volunteers - are particularly relevant.

Regional Groups

There are 9 Regional Groups spread over Germany. Most of the members are former volunteers who are studying or working and work for ICJA in their spare time. Their main task is providing a support network for international volunteers in Germany. They visit host families before your arrival, and organize regional meetings for the international volunteers living in the area in more or less regular intervals. At these regional meeting, you spend time with the German and international volunteers, make excursions, bake cakes, go ice skating, and in general have fun and also the opportunity to share troubles or high points with your fellow international volunteers. All expenses of the meeting, including travel costs, are covered by ICJA.



Ideally every one of you will have her/his personal contact person (**Mentor**) in her/his Regional Group. Their task and obligation is to stay in touch with you and support you during your time in Germany. They also are in contact with your host family and project. Most of the Mentors have been volunteers abroad themselves, so they usually do have an idea of what you are experiencing and can offer advice and support. Sometimes your mentor might need a push from you because maybe he/she has exams to pass at university or is busy with his/her own life. So PLEASE don't be shy to get into contact and write an email to him/her yourself. However, the first personal meeting between you and your mentor should be within the first month of your stay. You will get more information and the name and contact details of your contact person during the On-Arrival camp in Germany, or within the first weeks of your stay. **Unfortunately, in some regions our voluntarily working Regional Groups are not always able to find mentors for all of our volunteers.**

Life as a volunteer

In general, coming to a foreign country as a volunteer means facing unknown situations and customs. Especially during the first months there will be times that you will feel lonely and insecure and wish to be back home in familiar surroundings. All this is normal and part of adapting to a new culture. The best is not to constantly compare between home and Germany and try to find what you have left behind, but to encounter your new surrounding open hearted and curiously.

Most people think about Germany as **urban and industrial areas** and this might be a reason why many volunteers ask to be placed in a city. However, surprisingly for many, Germany consists to a large part of small towns, villages and remote rural areas, and accordingly, **most of the ICJA host families and host projects are in the countryside**. Prepare yourself for a placement in a small town or even a village! That can mean that the public transport connections are slow, with buses only leaving a few times a day. Using a bicycle often is a real alternative way of transportation. This might be, for many of you, an unexpected and new situation. Many times it is easier to become part of the local community in a small town than in a big city, which is much more anonymous.

Living in a host family

Living in a German host family is a good way to get to know the "German way of life". The host families offer to take in an international volunteer in the ICYE program since they are curious about other cultures, and in many cases, because their own son or daughter currently is or was abroad with ICYE. **They do not receive any financial contribution for hosting you!**

Being a host son or host daughter means that you should take part in family life just as any other member of the family with all the rights and duties this implies. You should not behave like a paying guest. The family doesn't want to be used as a hotel where the volunteer is only interested in eating and sleeping. Integrating into a yet unknown family might seem daunting to you. The following tips might offer some guidelines:

Try to spend time with your host family, taking part in their shared activities. Most German families share their evening dinner, and have some shared hobbies, for example walking, cycling, gardening or doing sports. Even if you might not be able to communicate easily in the beginning, showing an interest in getting to know your host family will certainly be appreciated by them.



Be prepared and willing to help with household chores – regardless if you are male or female. Most German families do not have maids or any other household staff. Generally, it is expected of children to assist with duties such as doing the dishes, washing clothing or cleaning; as host son or host daughter, you should also contribute to daily housework. Offer to do the dishes after dinner or help with hanging up laundry – showing that you are willing to help will have a positive effect on your relationship with your host family. And, very important, it certainly is your responsibility to keep your room clean by changing your bed linens regularly, vacuuming the floors and taking out the trash from your room. There is no faster way to ruin your relationship with your host family than expecting your host family to constantly clean up after you!

Living in a work placement (host project)

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 or share a flat with other (German or/and international) volunteers working at the same place.

At the moment, about one third of the volunteers are placed in host projects.

Living at the project site offers you a more independent living situation than staying with a host family. In most cases 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.

If you have certain preferences regarding your host family or work placement, please inform us in your application form. We will take them into consideration. **However, we cannot promise to fulfil your wish to live explicitly in a host family of host project.** This depends on many factors and at the end if we have enough host projects or enough host families available!

Your voluntary work during the exchange year

The idea of the ICYE exchange program is to explore another culture by living an everyday life. **A fundamental part of your everyday life will be working in a project, with regular hours and responsibilities** towards your project. You should not expect just to work when you feel like it. Your project expects you to be interested in the work, and they rely on you.

You might work in a kindergarten, in a youth centre, in a school or in a home for people with disabilities and elderly people, sometimes also in a youth hostel or a project working with displaced people. This work is not paid with a salary, as you are a volunteer, but you will get a pocket money.

Please be aware that you cannot apply for a specific project. ICJA will try to take your preferences regarding certain types of projects (such as work with children, work with young people or displaced people etc) into account. Nevertheless as the experience of many volunteers has shown, it is often unexpected situations in life that teach you most about yourself and what you can do.

Also, your visa is linked to your volunteer status. This means that as a participant you are not allowed to work a regular job or earn a salary, or you will lose your residency permit.

For further information on types of projects, please read our ICJA Germany Work Profile 2020/2021. You will find project examples and further information about living in a residential project which will help you to prepare.

Please also read carefully our Rules and Regulations form on the last pages which shows you the guidelines of our program.



Seminars



Three ICJA seminars are inherent part of your exchange year. There you will have the opportunity to make friends with your fellow volunteers, exchange experiences, feelings and questions, reflect on your fears, hopes and wishes and what you have experienced, ask and maybe answer questions that arose during the months, and learn about other cultures.

The seminars and workshops will be organized by the ICJA office staff as well as by trainers and ICJA volunteers. The seminars live from your active participation and input, and you are invited to contribute with ideas. **The participation at the seminars is compulsory for you.** The seminar days are part of your working time (so you don't have to take holidays to attend the seminars) All travel costs as well as the accommodation, food, material and pedagogical assistance are covered by ICJA.

There are three (in some cases four*) seminars you will attend:

OSCA – Orientation and Language Camp (Orientierungs- und Sprachcamp)

This is your first seminar when you arrive. Here you will get to know your fellow volunteers, and hear about other countries than Germany. We want to talk to you about your expectations as well as to prepare you for your time in Germany. You will learn a bit about German culture, and language, the structure and guidelines of ICJA and also get technical information as well as political content that will be relevant in your exchange. This first seminar will last 10 days. Have a good time!

ZAS – Mid Term Evaluation Camp (Zwischenauswertungsseminar)

Your midterm-camp will take place after roughly 6 months you arrived to Germany. You will be told the exact time, place and all necessary information in time. The focus of this seminar is to have a reflection about the first months and get a perspective for the following ones. You will also exchange your experiences and make an evaluation of the first part of your Exchange Year as well as preparing for the second half of the year. You will be able to listen to and learn from each other, but more important from yourself. We will also talk about ideas and plans for the coming months. The Mid Term Camp will last 5 days.

AUS – Final Evaluation Seminar (Auswertungsseminar)

At the final evaluation camp, you will have the possibility to evaluate your experiences, look at what you have learnt, in which way you might see things differently and how you have changed during the year. You will also share ideas and plans about going back home and your expectations which will prepare you for that. Last not least, you will have the chance to say good-bye to each other. It will last 5 days.



***Additional Seminar for “Political Education” (only for participants of BFD and *weltwärts* Scholarship Programme!)**

In case you are a participant in the German state funded voluntary service programme “*Bundesfreiwilligendienst – BFD*” programme or in the “*weltwärts*” scholarship programme, you additionally will take part in a seminar for political education which is not held by ICJA/ICYE Germany, but by a public institution.

Practical Information

What you can expect from ICJA Germany

Pocket Money

Your visa and your residence permit are bound to your status as a volunteer. This means that you are legally not allowed to earn a salary. As a volunteer, you will receive pocket money. Normally the pocket money is paid by the project where you are doing your voluntary work. Within the ICYE Federation, the minimal standard for the pocket money in Germany is **100 Euros/month**. Some projects pay more. If the projects are not able to pay this amount, ICJA pays the 100 Euros to the volunteers.

If there is the possibility to take part in a state funded German voluntary service programme called “***Bundesfreiwilligendienst – BFD***”, the minimum standard of your pocket money is 150 Euros/month (paid by the project and subsided by the German government). If it will be possible that you take part in this programme, depends if your project is accredited for it (we cannot guarantee this beforehand!)

If you are a participant in the “***weltwärts*” scholarship Programme, your pocket money will be 180 Euros/month.**

Transport

If you live in a host family and have to use public transport (bus, local train etc.) to get to your project, your transport costs will be covered either by your project or by ICJA. Usually, you will get a monthly ticket for the public transport in your city/region.

ICJA also buys rail passes (BahnCard) for all volunteers. With this rail pass you can get price reductions for second-class train tickets.

Insurance Coverage

You are covered by a private health insurance and a third party liability-insurance taken out for you by ICYE. In general, you have to pay first for all medical expenses such as doctor’s visits and prescribed medication, but then you can get the money back from the insurance.

If you are taking part in a government funded programme (e.g. “*Bundesfreiwilligendienst – BFD*” or the “*weltwärts*” Scholarship Programme), you will additionally be insured by a public German health care system. More details on your insurance coverage will be provided during your arrival-camp in Germany.

Language Course

As you all know, the ICYE program includes 30 hours of language classes. ICJA provides the first 8 hours of language class during the Orientation Camp and once the volunteers have reached their respective destinations, we arrange decentralized language courses, with the help of host families and projects. So you can get the rest of the hours through these courses.

ICJA will support your German language classes with a sum of 100 Euro. Those of you, having a "weltwärts" scholarship will get up to 300 Euros. However, the total cost of your German language classes will most probably be higher than 100 Euro. There are very big differences, depending on the place you stay it can cost between 100 up to 350 Euro or more, also depending on the language school, hours and length. Please be prepared to pay for the difference yourself.

This is the way it works:

Classes of professional quality at community colleges and language schools regularly cover between 50 and 150 hours. It is not possible to book only the first 22 hours. To support the volunteers in their effort, we reimburse up to 100 Euro for the language class. This financially benefits the volunteer. Here an example:

ICJA needs to provide for 30 hours

8 hours are taught at the Orientation Camp

A volunteer participates in a 100 hour local language class, which costs 250 Euros. This equals a price of 2,50 Euros per hour. ICJA reimburses 100 Euros: 2,50 Euros per hour = 40 hours.

And the volunteer has to cover the rest of 150 Euros.

IMPORTANT: This is just an example. Most classes are less than 250 Euros, but you can see that in this example ICJA has provided 48 hours of language class.

Since German classes are very popular and the slots are limited, we try to have reservations ready before the volunteers arrive, otherwise you might have to wait for several weeks before starting a class.

There are also other, less expensive ways to learn German, such as language tandems and online resources. You will find suggestions for online resources in the Addendum.

We highly recommend you to start learning German before your departure to Germany, as some basic vocabulary will make your start much easier!

Internet

Many, **but not all host situations provide free Wi-Fi.** Some of them cannot offer it 24 hours/day or in your private space. Therefore you have to be prepared to buy an own Wi-Fi stick for your laptop or a better rate for your mobile phone if that is the case. **Those costs will not be reimbursed by ICJA.**

Support from the ICJA office

You will get a contact person in the ICJA office, who you can contact when you need support. The ICJA office also organizes three seminars, offers advice regarding insurance, visa issues and any other administrative questions connected to your year in Germany.

If you have questions concerning family life or your project, please contact your regional group / mentor first. They are trained to support you and will in most cases be able to help you. If not, contact your coordinator at the office.



ICJA Incoming team

*Meeting of a
Regional group*



What is expected of you

Be reliable and act responsively towards your work in the project. This means, for example: arrive on time for work, let your project know if you are sick and cannot come to work, and arrange your holiday times with your project as early as possible.

Have an open mind regarding your host family or host project placement. **It is very likely that you will live in a small town or village, and not a big city.**

Be prepared to become active on your own: it lies in your actions and your dedication to determine how quickly you will learn German and if you will meet people and make friends in Germany

Take some time to adjust:

Watching movies only in your mother language, talking all the time via Skype or Facebook or being all the time in the mobile phone with your friends and family, and generally having one foot back home makes adjusting to life in Germany much harder and might make it more difficult for you to build relationships with your host family and other people you meet in Germany.

Daily life approximated Prices:

To give you a general idea of what things cost in Germany, please have a look at the list of approximate prices below:

Cup of coffee	1-5 Euro
Milk (1 l)	1 Euro
Apples (1 kilo)	2 Euro
Beer in a pub	3,50 -4,50 Euro
Paperback book	10 Euro
Pack of cigarettes	7 Euro
One Way Bus/Train Ticket	2,80 – 3,50 Euro
Train ticket Berlin-Frankfurt (no discount)	132 Euro
Prepaid chip card for mobile phones	10,00 – 25,00 Euros

You might only receive the minimum amount of pocket money (100 Euro/month). **This is in no way comparable to a salary, and will not be enough for travelling and any extra expenses.**

Before your departure to Germany, arrange sufficient funds to keep you financially stable during your year without relying on your volunteer's pocket money!

Preparation

Vaccinations and health

There is no obligation for any vaccination in Germany. Nevertheless, the German government publishes recommendations for vaccination, you can check on this homepage:
https://www.rki.de/EN/Content/infections/Vaccination/Vaccination_node.html

Following you find some vaccinations we would like to recommend you to get **before your arrival in Germany** - regarding your host project and the corresponding tasks you will do there:

- If you work in projects with **children, for example kindergartens, children daycare centers or schools** we recommend you vaccination for:
 - Pertussis (Bordetella Pertussis)
 - Rubeola, mumps, rubella
 - Varicella zoster infection
- If you work in projects which take **medical care of people, for example elderly homes and homes for handicapped people**, you are recommended to get vaccinations for:
 - Pertussis (Bordetella Pertussis)
 - Hepatitis A virus infection
 - Rubeola, mumps, rubella
- If your project is situated **mostly outside in the forest, parks and nature and you will have contact with animals**, we strongly recommend you to get vaccinations for:
 - Borrelia burgdorferi (lyme disease mostly caused through ticks)
 - Tick-borne encephalitis

Please check your medical health certificate for your history of vaccinations and if necessary make some follow ups taking the list above into consideration.

In case you are insecure about your project description, whether or not to get vaccinated, please contact the contact person(s) at your future host project as soon as you have their contact. They will be happy to hear from you and can tell you best, which vaccination you should get.

Please note that the health insurance which is part of your ICYE programme will **NOT cover any upcoming vaccination costs**. Anyhow, **in some cases, the work placement of the volunteer requires a certain vaccination**. In this case, either the project or the volunteer has to cover the costs for the vaccination.

Although HIV/AIDS is not extremely widespread in Germany, there is an increasing rate of people who are HIV positive, which is due to a decreasing public awareness. As in every country, there is also the danger of other sexually transmitted infections like hepatitis. **The usage of condoms therefore is strongly recommended!**

Police Check

In Germany, most projects working with vulnerable people (children, people with disabilities etc.) require to bring an official statement from the police, which shows that they have not been prosecuted for any crimes (known as police check or *Polizeiliches Führungszeugnis*). Therefore, ICJA asks their volunteers to bring such a police statement with them to Germany.

What to bring

- Warm clothes and shoes suitable to rainy and cold weather
- Small gifts for your host family/tutor in your project
- Things typical for your home country (for Country Presentation at the On Arrival-camp)
- Important documents:
- Your passport
- Your visa and visa invitation letter
- Health certificate
- Police check
- International Driver's Licence/Driver's License
- Return airline ticket

Make sure that you can carry your luggage by yourself!

Travelling from the airport to the On-Arrival Camp and then to your hosting situation will involve some walking, and possibly some stairs at train stations, and nobody is going to carry your luggage for you.

We recommend one suitcase or backpack and hand luggage.

Final Remarks

The beginning of your exchange year will be a lot easier if you have already started to learn the language before coming to Germany. This will help you to build up contacts to people and to adapt to life in Germany faster. And in particular, if you expect to do any interesting tasks in your project, speaking German is an absolute necessity! Therefore, start learning the language as early as possible!

If you make an effort, even though your grammar or pronunciation might not be perfect - people will recognize that you want to communicate with them and they will be more open to listening to you. However, do not expect to learn perfect German in one year, even though some of the volunteers achieve a high fluency in German.

Contact with home

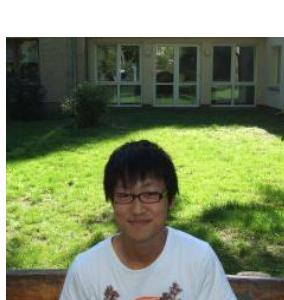
Everybody involved in ICJA knows how it feels to be a volunteer. Everybody has experienced the feeling of homesickness and loneliness.

Nevertheless we suggest you to try **not to keep too intensive contact with home throughout the year because this might hinder your ability to get truly familiar with your new surroundings**. We generally do not encourage travelling to your home country during your exchange year (except in case of emergency, illness or death of a relative). We also advise all volunteers not to receive visits from friends and relatives from home. If so it is better at the end of the year. Also, it is not allowed to receive visitors during the obligatory ICYE seminars. If you're planning to have such visitors, please ask your host family beforehand and seek clarification about which time (when and how long) it would be possible for them to receive extra visitors. If you want to take vacation days while your friends or family visit, or go travelling, it is really important that you speak with your project and your host family as early in advance as possible. If you work in a school or another kind of project with fixed (school) holidays, you might need to take your vacation time during these official closures time. We recommend talking with your tutor in the project about this at the beginning of your voluntary year.

Return

The program of ICYE generally is a one year exchange program. Please be prepared to stay here for the full 12 months.

We hope we could make you curious or even excited about an exchange year in Germany!



Annex I: Visa Procedure

Technically all volunteers from Non-European Union countries have to apply for a visa before coming to Germany. If you have the nationality of a European Union member country you can enter Germany without a visa. Volunteers from Japan, Israel, the USA and South Korea can enter Germany without a visa but must apply for permission to stay at their regional immigration office within the first week in Germany.

For volunteers from all other countries: It is not possible to enter with a tourist visa and then get a regular visa once you are here. If you don't have a regular visa, the officials at the airport might refuse your entry.

How to get your Visa

When your voluntary year in Germany is confirmed by ICYE, you will receive an invitation letter from ICJA Germany and a contract with your project and some other documents.

Please get in contact with your sending organization to have more information about the application process as it might take months. The specific procedure as well as the time it takes depend on the policy of the German Embassy in your country; please check their website and ask your National Committee for details.

What to bring to the Embassy

For the visa application at the German Embassy, you will need your passport – **check if it is valid at least 6 months after the end of the exchange, even before sending your documents for the application!**-, biometric pictures, and a certificate of health. The embassy will also ask for a letter of motivation, as well as school and university diplomas and/or other documents (i.e. the ICYE insurance certificate).

The letter of motivation is needed in all countries and might be requested. It has to include:

- The reason why you want to be a volunteer in Germany
- Explain how this year of volunteering fits to your curriculum
- Explain in which kind of project you will work (see the project description of your work placement provided by ICJA).
- Describe what you think you could contribute to German society with your volunteer work
- Describe what you want to do when you come back to your home country and how you want to use/transfer your experiences from Germany in your country.

All these points are also a good preparation for the interview in the embassy. So take some time to think about it and let other people read it.

Please ask the embassy well in advance which documents you need to bring, since it might take you some time to get everything ready. If there are any problems, please inform your National Committee right away.

In addition to the above-mentioned documents, you will receive documents from ICJA, which are crucial to the visa process: An invitation letter, a voluntary service contract, a presentation letter of the ICJA organization, as well as letters of support from different German government agencies (when applicable). It is also advisable to bring your voluntary service project description, which ICJA will forward to you once your placement has been confirmed.

Ask for a “National Visa Category D”, valid for 12 months. It might happen that you will nevertheless only receive a visa that is valid for 90 days. In that case, you need to apply for a residential permit once you are in Germany (see last paragraph). **This last is normal and quite common**, you don't need to worry.

Interview at the Embassy

When you have your visa interview at the German Embassy, it is important that you are prepared. The officials at the Embassy might ask detailed questions about your motivation and how the voluntary year fits into your curriculum vitae. Whether or not the Embassy will issue a visa for you depends a lot on how consistently you can answer these questions.

Questions that might be asked:

- What are the aims of the ICYE exchange program?
- Why do you want to participate?
- Where are you going to live? / Which city?
- What will you be doing in Germany?
- How does the voluntary year fit in your life plans?

You also need to be able to give reasons for returning to your home country after the voluntary service. If any problems arise, please don't hesitate to contact your National Committee or us! We will do our very best to help you to get your visa.

Applying for a Residency Permit in Germany

If your visa is only valid for 90 days, you will need to extend your visa by applying for a residence permit for one year once you are in Germany. **This residence permit might cost up to 150 EUR, which you would have to pay yourself.**

You need biometric photos (which will cost around 17 Euros here in Germany). They might be cheaper in your home country. The procedure until you receive your residency permit takes 8 to 10 weeks. During this time you cannot leave Germany.

Note: ICJA sent information about the Visa procedure to every sending committee and this will be useful. Please read it completely and in case of questions contact them.

Annex II: Rules and Regulations

The success of your exchange year will depend very much on you and your attitude. Like any program, there are limitations, rules and regulations which have been established to enable us to accomplish the goals of the ICYE program together. Please read the following rules carefully and then return the signed agreement.

To: Volunteer to Germany	Name:
From: ICYE Germany - ICJA	Home country:

1. I have read and understood the guidelines for incoming volunteer in the National Profile of ICYE Germany and also the Federation's Guide for volunteers and I agree to follow them.
2. I will learn the language of my host country.
3. I am prepared to adapt to the lifestyle of my host family/host situation.
4. I am prepared to accept whatever assignment my host committee prepares for me.
I am aware that I may be placed in a small village. Refusal of placements will not be tolerated.
5. Change of placements will not be made during the first three months except in cases where the volunteer's well-being is threatened.
6. When changing host situation, ICYE will work with the volunteer to find a suitable new placement. The volunteer must be prepared to accept the new host situation found by ICYE Germany.
7. I will attend all obligatory ICJA seminars: the orientation, mid-term and final evaluation camp.
8. The ICYE-program is a volunteer program. I am prepared to work up to 35 hours a week in a voluntary work placement. Agreements made between the volunteer and the place of work must be followed.
9. The ICJA program contains voluntary work within the ICYE Germany program. I know that it is absolutely forbidden to work in order to earn money: This is **illegal!!!**
10. I am aware that the pocket money I receive for voluntary work only covers the daily additional expenses (as stated in the National Profile of ICYE Germany).
11. I understand that ICYE is not a travel agency and that the main purpose of my exchange year Is to do my volunteer service. If I travel to another country outside Germany I have to inform ICJA beforehand.
12. I will obey the laws of my host country, Germany.
13. I will not use any illegal substance or drugs during my exchange year.
14. I will return to my home country at the end of the exchange year.
15. Marriage during the exchange year is prohibited.

I hereby confirm that I have read and understood the above rules.

I also confirm that I have been informed of the fact that my medical insurance and my liability insurance will expire when my exchange year ends and that from that time ICYE Germany has no further obligations towards me.

I am aware that not following the above mentioned rules and regulations will lead to the expulsion from the program and the return to my home country.

Date

Signature of volunteer

Signature of parents (if volunteer is under 18)

Annex III: Motivation and Reflection Letter

Your name and age: _____

Your country of residence: _____

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 mental picture/ 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/or WhatsApp every day?

Annex IV: Motivation Letter for the embassy

Address of the German Embassy

your name

Visa department

Your address

Motivation letter

The embassy requires a motivation letter as part of the documents to obtain a Visa.

***Please note that the Motivation Letter for the embassy must be a different one than for the ICYE in the application process and you don't have to send this to us! This is only a short a guide that might help you to elaborate it.**

1. Please explain why you want to do a voluntary service in Germany.
2. Explain how this year of volunteering fits in your curriculum.
3. How does the voluntary service fit into your current life?
4. Explain in which kind of project you will work (see the project description of your work placement). If you have not got any, please write down, what you would like to do and change the part as soon as you get your placement description.
5. Describe what you think you could contribute to German society with your volunteer work.
6. Describe what you want to do when you come back to your home country and how you want to use/ transfer your experiences from Germany in your country.
7. What do you expect, how can the experience of your volunteer year be helpful for your future plans?

Annex IV: Learning German by Yourself

Online Resources

Deutsche Welle.de: <http://www.dw.de/dw/0,,2469,00.html>

With the free German courses from Deutsche Welle, you can choose the learning style that suits you best: e-learning at the computer, with short videos, audio courses or podcasts, or with texts and worksheets you can print out. Select from courses for beginners, intermediate learners, and advanced learners. The Course Finder helps you choose the best format for each level. You can download easily audio training for your phone or for your mp3-player.

- **For A1-A2 learners:** <http://www.dw.de/dw/0,,9671,00.html>

Here you'll find all the episodes from Radio D, Deutsche Welle's radio language course. The material is geared towards beginners who have no or very little previous experience with German. Emphasis is placed on listening comprehension and each of the audio episodes is accompanied by a text manuscript.

- **For advanced level learners:** <http://www.dw.de/dw/0,,2555,00.html>.

Throughout the 26 chapters you'll learn the language needed to conduct business in Germany. Each chapter is accompanied by an audio file and a manuscript.

Goethe Institute.de:

JETZT Deutsch lernen: <http://www.goethe.de/z/jetzt/eindex.htm>

This is a cooperative project between the Goethe-Institut and the Justus Liebig University in Gießen. It focuses on the development of reading and listening/visual listening skills and creative writing. The tasks and exercises are based on articles published on jetzt.de (the German newspaper Süddeutsche Zeitung's online news magazine for young people) and on video sequences which cover similar topics and are produced by the project team. Interactive components of the learning environment include several discussion boards, a tutored chat and a wiki writing workshop which allow learners worldwide to communicate with each other and with native speakers of German.

Babbel.com: <http://www.babbel.com/>

The comprehensive learning system combines effective education methods with state-of-the-art technology. Interactive online courses will improve your grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation skills in no time. With the integrated speech recognition tool you can test and practice your pronunciation. Babbel knows what you've already learned and where your problems lie. The review manager adjusts exercises accordingly at evenly spaced intervals designed to optimize human memory. They also offer an iPhone app.

The disadvantage is that you need to pay around 10€ per month, but sometimes you can have a free version for testing it. Have a first look before buying it!

Planet Schule.de: http://www.planet-schule.de/sf/php/02_sen01.php?fach=39

Multimedia content for learners and teachers. Here you will find videos, sitcoms and series for German as 2nd or foreign language.

Deutsch-Lernen.com: http://www.deutsch-lernen.com/d_index.php

Free German courses for starters and advanced learners, exercises, online tests, and help for writing applications (Cover Letter and CV) in German.

Deutsch Lingo4u: <http://deutsch.lingo4u.de/>

Free German grammar lessons for native speakers and for German as a foreign language. The site contains comprehensive explanations for learning German as well as some cultural information about German-speaking countries. You can download the lessons as pdf files.

Mein Deutschbuch.de: http://www.mein-deutschbuch.de/lernen.php?menu_id=1

Web portal for general German lessons with a focus on foreign language: grammar, online-exercises, dictation, lists with verbs.

Language Tests

Goethe.de: <http://www.goethe.de/lrn/prj/pba/bes/sd1/deindex.htm>

Testdaf.de: www.testdaf.de/index.php

Models and tips for the language tests Goethe-Zertifikats A1, A2, B1 and TestDaf

German Courses

Volkshochschulen: <http://www.vhs.de/de/index.html>

The Volkshochschulen are public education centres located in most German cities. They also offer German courses for foreigners, usually at an affordable rate.

Language Tandems

In a language tandem, two partners with different native languages learn from each other. Tandem stands for self-organised language learning and cultural exchange: you are flexible regarding time and place, you choose learning goals and methods according to your needs and interests, and you acquire language skills in an authentic context and can learn more about another culture. It is also a good way to make new friends.

Online:

Community D by Deutsche Welle: <http://www.dw.de/dw/0,,9035,00.html>

For many, learning alone is no fun. Here, you get the opportunity to interact with the editors, other German learners from all around the world and their teachers.

Once you are in Germany:

Find your tandem partner with one of these websites:

- Erste Nachhilfe.de: <http://www.erstenachhilfe.de/tandempartner>
Enter the name of your city, the language you want to teach, the language you want to learn and your availability and you will get access to the profile of a lot of person looking for a tandem partner.
- If there is a university in your city in Germany, have a look on the websites of their language centres. Some examples:
In Berlin: <http://www.sprachenzentrum.fu-berlin.de/slz/tandem/index.html>
In the Rhein-Ruhr area: <http://www.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/zfa/sgl/tandem/index.html>
In Stuttgart: <http://www.studis-online.de/Fragen-Brett/read.php?82,732311>
<http://www.sz.uni-stuttgart.de/tandemlernen/index.html>
In Hamburg: <http://www.campus-hamburg.de/community/tandem.html>

Recommended Books and Newspapers:

Textbooks: <http://www.hueber.de/deutsch-als-fremdsprache/>

Newspapers: <http://www.deutsch-perfekt.com/produkte>

Online news in easy German: <http://www.nachrichtenleicht.de/>

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