

### editorial

#### 15 YEARS OF IB VOLUNTEERS' ABROAD PROGRAMS – VOLUNTARY SERVICES ABROAD OFFERED BY THE IB

It started with a name. Despite all criticism, we managed to develop the project with the lengthy title "Freiwilligenauslandsprogramme – Volunteers' Abroad Programs" into a proper brand. Finding a name and logo was one of my first tasks when I took up a new job at the IB's central coordination office. When we started out, we could not predict how the project would evolve. But looking back, I am more than satisfied with our work and successes, which continue to have a lasting impact on people inside and outside of our organization. The IB VAP are more than "just" international voluntary services. They stand for families and friendships, an association, an educational institution and team; they have developed into a movement.

This anniversary newsletter allows us to give personal insights into the 15-year-long history of the international voluntary services that are provided by the IB. One of our priorities is to show a diversity of perspectives. We believe that this newsletter reflects this aim, as it allows us to present the experiences of different people involved in the VAP movement.

We hope you enjoy reading and remembering, and most importantly, coming up with new questions. We always welcome criticism and feedback, not only regarding our anniversary newsletter.

Bernhard Marien, IB VAP Kassel



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where to go?



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## 15 YEARS OF IB VAP – REMEMBERING THE BEGINNING

Dear IB VAP teams and volunteers: Happy 15th anniversary! Countless people worldwide shared life in all its colors during these past years, you enabled and experienced so many encounters and memorable moments!

When I think back to the beginning and remember how the IB first got involved in organizing international voluntary services, two words come to mind: passion and friendship.

Due to the enthusiasm stemming from my own voluntary service, I took up a job at the IB in Nuremberg in 2004, through which I initiated and supported both European and non-European voluntary services. I started my work with a lot of passion and 10 working hours per week, but my workload and hours quickly increased. Thanks to the friendship between Ellen Podolsky (former head of IB Nuremberg) and Christa Diehl-Kahl (head of IB Kassel) I got in contact with Bernhard Marien (employee at IB Kassel) and the four of us formed a team that has been successful in advancing the conceptual and educational components of IB VAP. Because of his many travels, Bernhard was just as enthusiastic about the project as I was, and we spent many hours discussing the following questions: How can we structure a seminar? What do we want participants to learn through the program? How can we make sure to find the right organization for each volunteer if we only have one weekend to get to know them? Which organizations do we want to include in our partner network? Which costs are associated with this project and how can we cover them?...

Due to our passion about the program we were also happy to support volunteers who had already found a host organization they wanted to work with and who were looking for a sending organization – though that created additional work for us. Indeed, we sometimes tended to overload ourselves with work: at our first two introductory seminars, Bernhard and I not only led the seminar, but also cooked for everyone. Another time we decided to host two seminars with a total of 50 volunteers at the same place and time. Nevertheless, these experiences have given rise to a wonderful friendship between us.

And this was always the goal of our work: IB VAP should serve as a means to connect individuals, foster relationships between people from all around the world, and create a passion that motivates them to work on themselves and contribute to improving their environment.

IB VAP has matured, it has become more professional, coherent, and, I am sure about this, better. I am grateful for having had the opportunity to be part of the at times chaotic, but always heartfelt and very moving first years of the program. I congratulate all those who worked on making IB VAP what it is today. Happy Birthday!

Katharina Stumpf, social education worker, co-founder of the IB VAP



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returnee seminar for the volunteers who went abroad 2005-2006



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1 YEAR OR 1 LIFE?

2005 – I was considering going abroad for a year. The problem was that I was kind of late with making this decision, and the volunteer positions offered by the well-known organizations for voluntary services were already filled. But then my mom met someone in a Brazilian beach bar (“barraca”) whose brother worked as the head of a social institution – an encounter that created an opportunity for me to volunteer in Brazil. To turn this plan into reality, I started calling every possible sending organization, always asking them the same question: “Hello, my name is Janik Kühn, I found a project in Brazil in which I would like to do a voluntary service. Would you be able to be my sending organization?” Every time, I received the same answer: “NO”. I had already given up on the idea when I dialed the number of the IB. But then Bernhard answered the phone and his spontaneous reaction to my question was: “Yes, of course!”. This moment marks the beginning of my voluntary service and my relationship with the IB. It was followed by two memorable preparatory seminars in Tettenborn and Berlin, lively communication and exchange of advice within our group of volunteers, and a very special returnee seminar in Bad Sachsa. Then there was the founding of the association for former volunteers (Zuhause Weltweit (zw)) in my parents’ kitchen, numerous seminars to which I contributed content (I was the one who came up with the shaking game), and many funny and productive (?) zw-meetings in Berlin – Marburg – Tübingen – Cologne – Kassel – and Frankfurt. I guided volunteers

through self-reflection exercises, listened to their personal stories, and participated in pedagogical conferences and NaDiMa (a training to increase consciousness for sustainability, diversity, and power relations). I am still involved in the latter, which gives me the chance to continue working with the IB.

During these past years, I got to know many people within and through the organization. I am still friends with them, and they keep contributing to my personal development. We go on vacations together, invite each other to personal events, I can always call them with my questions and enjoy spending time with them: Bernhard, Katharina, Anja, Conny, Kornelia, Wiebke, Philipp, Johannes, Daniel D., Daniel M., Trixi, Anne, Michael, Andrea, and many more. These people and my time with the IB have taught me so much about seminars, methods, being a coach, social engagement, and last but not least, racism and discrimination. All the things I learned still influence me and have been useful and applicable in many situations. Even the contacts through which I found my current job resulted from my work with the IB. One year or one life? For me, it turned out to be the latter, as I am sure that our shared journey will continue. And I am excited for whatever happens next...

Janik Kühn, one of the first IB VAP volunteers



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**15 YEARS OF COOPERATION WITH THE  
GERMAN SCHOOL IN MÁLAGA**

Not long ago, I was told that our institution, the German School in Málaga, was the first non-German institution to partner with the "IB Volunteers' Abroad Programs – IB VAP". This makes us very proud and we are grateful for the more than 70 volunteers who supported our kindergarten teachers and janitors during the past 15 years. Our cooperation with the IB VAP has definitely become an integral part of our school life. Like every year around this time, we eagerly await the arrival of the "newbies". How will they adapt to their tasks in the school, will they get along with their colleagues and the other employees? Will they get used to the Spanish mentality, the Mediterranean food, and the different climate? Thanks to the IB's professionally organized preparatory seminars (I had an opportunity to see this for myself a few years ago in Fulda), the volunteers are always well prepared when arriving in Málaga and quickly adapt to the new environment. We are also curious to see whether the time with our "newbies" will create new anecdotes that turn into articles for our school's yearbook (e.g. when volunteers give presentations about the voluntary service for students) or inspire us to come up with new house rules (like that one time when two volunteers had taken in a cat with eight kittens, which turned their apartment into a mess that almost caused our cleaning staff to experience a mental breakdown). We are sure that the volunteers who will be staying with us this year will later share the opinion of their predecessors that time has flown by too fast. We are happy that many of our former volunteers have stayed in contact with us and have visited us after the end of their service here.

I want to thank the IB and its employees for our cooperation and their investment in our partnership. I hope to continue the good work together for (at least) another 15 years.

Best regards,

Gernot Fuchs,  
German School of Málaga



*anniversary*

**15 YEARS OF VOLUNTARY SERVICES ABROAD**

Since the 1990s, some of the IB locations have been sending volunteers to other European countries. However, only a small number of people went abroad, often due to organizational and financial hurdles.

In 2004, the IB voluntary services started to work on a project that would allow us to systematically and continuously send young volunteers abroad. The IB offices in Kassel and Nuremberg offered to take over this task and act as representatives of all IB locations, and Kassel was then turned into a central coordination office. It was decided that all IB offices should be able to send volunteers abroad, but the coordination would be managed by Kassel.

The IB considers it its responsibility to foster international exchange through sending volunteers abroad and thereby contribute to intercultural understanding. This sentiment is reflected in our name and has caused many people to ask us if they could do a voluntary service abroad through one of our programs. Throughout the years, the framework for a voluntary service abroad improved and now we also offer volunteering opportunities outside of Europe. When the voluntary service was recognized as a possible substitute for the civilian service (§14c ZDG), financial conditions for male volunteers improved: they started to receive the same financial compensation as those who were doing a civilian service. However, the federal ministry did not respond to criticism regarding the violation of the principle of gender equality that was brought forward by organizations who provided voluntary services.

It was not until the development volunteer service "weltwärts" was introduced through the BMZ (German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development) in 2008, and the program "Internationaler Jugendfreiwilligendienst" (IJFD – international youth volunteer service) was created to compensate for the suspension of the compulsory military and civil service in 2011, that the organizational and financial framework of the international voluntary service was improved. This led to a significant rise in applications for the program. However, the work of the IB Volunteers' Abroad Program was and is by no means an automatic success!

Insufficient public funding means that we rely on voluntary donations, which, as we found out a few years ago, are not always tax deductible. The number of participants across all organizations who offer international volunteer services is stagnant, since there are numerous opportunities for young people who want to spend some time abroad and sometimes these tend to fit better into their personal plans for life. The IB VAP recognized this issue and adapted its offers (e.g. by creating a program for people above the age of 27 who are willing to pay to do a voluntary service abroad, or by introducing shorter or intermediate stays for those who do not want to go abroad for 12 months) and together with other organizations (forming the Gesprächskreis Internationale Freiwilligendienste (GIF) – a multi-stakeholder policy dialogue) participates in the campaign "voluntary year abroad – FSJ".

The past history of the IB VAP, which required constant flexibility to tackle challenges, makes me confident that my colleagues will be able to successfully deal with whatever lies ahead in the next 15 years. I congratulate you on the IB VAP's successes of the past 15 years, thank you for your hard work and all the best for the future!

Hartmut Brombach, head of the IB department for voluntary services and active citizenship

Dein Berg ruft...



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We, the Pastoral Social of the Archdiocese Cuenca-Ecuador, want to send our congratulations to our friends from the IB VAP who are celebrating their 15th anniversary this year.

Ten years ago, we embarked on a common journey and have since experienced various ups and downs: we realized great developments but also came across obstacles on our way. However, so far we managed to tackle all of the challenges we encountered together. In the end, they proved to be good learning experiences that helped us to improve our services as sending and host organizations within the framework of international volunteer services.

The following are some of our shared successes:

As you can imagine, when we started the collaboration between our organizations it was crucial to discuss visions, work guidelines, and similar topics. During this time, we were grateful that the internet allowed for the exchange of ideas and to also have the phone as a back-up for when the internet connection was disrupted. Although this is less of a problem nowadays, it definitely was ten years ago, and we barely had any conversation without experiencing technical difficulties. But despite these obstacles we were happy to be able to talk about our work with our colleagues from "the other office". In my opinion, this beginning phase created a good foundation for our relationship, fostered comprehension and trust, and thereby led to the realization of the objective: "cooperation in the context of the international voluntary service".

Another success that could be considered a milestone in our shared history was the creation of a relationship on equal footing between the employees of the IB office and the office of the Pastoral Social voluntary program in Cuenca-Ecuador. This was a great motivation and inspiration to establish adequate structures for the sending and receiving of "our volunteers".

For these reasons, I hope with all my heart that the IB VAP Team will continue to build bridges for the voluntary service and will keep sending young adults abroad and receive volunteers from other socio-cultural backgrounds. The experiences these young people make during their services will help them to develop social competences and learn from others. They will realize that our differences are no reason for alienation; in contrast, meeting people that are "different" from ourselves enriches us and teaches us to respect others...

HAPPY anniversary!!!

**Carmen Abril, mentor and voluntary service program coordinator of the Pastoral Social 2**



*Hanno, Carmen and the acogida den Shiña team, 2009-2010*



*Timur Stein in the school in Tacapamba, Parroquia de San Cristobal, 2009-2010*



*Manuel Vaultont in the library of San Cristobal, 2009-2010*



*Final seminar 2010:  
Carmen, Jacky, Manuel, Timur and Caritas and BeSo volunteers*



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15 YEARS OF IB VOLUNTEERS' ABROAD PROGRAMS – 15 VOLUNTEERS IN THE IJBS



**MDSM—IJBS—IYMC**

FUNDACJA NA RZECZ MIĘDZYNARODOWEGO DOMU SPOTKAŃ MŁODZIEŻY W OŚWIĘCIMIU  
STIFTUNG FÜR DIE INTERNATIONALE JUGENDBEGEGNUNGSTÄTTE IN OŚWIĘCIM/AUSCHWITZ  
INTERNATIONAL YOUTH MEETING CENTRE IN OŚWIĘCIM/AUSCHWITZ FOUNDATION

Since the foundation of the International Youth Meeting Centre in Oświęcim/Auschwitz (IJBS), our educational work has been supported by volunteers. They are young Germans doing a voluntary service through the Aktion Sühnezeichen Friedensdienste (ASF – Action Reconciliation Service for Peace), and since 1998, we also receive volunteers from the Austrian organization Gedenkdienst (Holocaust Memorial Service). In 2006, we were for the first time joined by young volunteers from the Internationaler Bund. Due to the long-lasting and positive cooperation with the Internationaler Bund, we are looking forward to working with the 15th IB volunteer this year.

The volunteers we receive play an essential role in the work of the IJBS, as they take over important tasks during their year-long stay in Oświęcim. These include, for example:

- » Providing organizational and educational support for the study groups who come to the IJBS (they usually stay between 4 and 7 days)
- » Supporting the learning process that is initiated by being confronted with the history of Auschwitz
- » Helping during the preparation and implementation of educational projects for adolescents from Oświęcim and the surrounding region, as well as assisting during intercultural seminars that are planned and realized by the IJBS
- » Contributing to our guests' understanding of the complicated coexistence of the 800-year old town Oświęcim and the concentration camp Auschwitz; leading guided tours through the town.

Additionally, the volunteers assist us in our work in the library and archive. They help with the organization of cultural events that are held at the IJBS – concerts, exhibitions, lectures – which are mostly organized for the citizens of Oświęcim. The volunteers also support us by doing translations and proof-reading publications written by the IJBS. The objective of the voluntary program is the personal and professional development of the volunteers as well as their acquisition of new skills and knowledge which will help them in the future, both in- and outside their workplace.

We want to thank the Internationaler Bund for the strong support of our work, which would not be the same without the new ideas that the volunteers contribute each year. We congratulate you on your 15th anniversary and hope that our close and trusted collaboration will continue for the next 15 years.

At this point, we also want to thank Alan, Marianna, Michael, Alexander, Niklas, Tasja, François, Jacob, Astrid, Lars, Paula, Sophie, Sara, Saskia and Max for their efforts and great help.

Best regards from Oświęcim

Leszek Szuster, Director of the IJBS

looking back

MEMORIES FOR LIFE

This month, 12 years ago, I was volunteering abroad through a program offered by the IB. And as I write this text, I am again travelling through Spain, like I was 12 years ago. In the past years, a lot has changed – I sometimes see the voluntary service as the start of my independent, self-determined, and exciting life, and still enjoy thinking back to the great seminars and the people I met there. The voluntary year also meant that, for the first time in my life, I had to take responsibility for another person, namely an eight-year-old boy with health issues. The house of a wonderful Spanish family living in the Canary Islands was my home for 12 months. This was a new experience for both parties, but luckily, we developed a relationship that was – and still is – characterized by mutual respect, sympathy, and appreciation. During those 12 months full of challenges, experiences, and adventures that have had a long-lasting effect on me, I developed a friendship with said family that lasts until today.

Alvaro visited me shortly after my voluntary service had come to an end and spent Christmas in wintery Hamburg. I returned to Spain together with my girlfriend to visit the family and get some sun. Until today, we are in contact and continue visiting each other, despite all changes: for the past 6 months, I have been travelling along the coast of the Atlantic in a camper van and will start my second study program afterwards. Alvaro has grown taller than me, has been the Spanish champion of Open-Sea-Kayaking and will soon start his university studies.

My voluntary service still has an impact on me, not only because the family keeps inviting me back to the Canary Islands, and I am grateful for the experiences I had during the year abroad. I can only recommend everyone to do the same, even though there is no mandatory civilian service anymore. It is a unique opportunity to get to know yourself, the world, and other people – and to learn to take responsibility for them.

Jakob Mühl, former volunteer



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"Today we're going on a dragon hunt...!" This children's game is always part of every seminar that I participate in. It has sort of become my trademark and I still enjoy explaining and playing the game.

My name is Walter, I am 30 years old; I am originally from Aachen and now live in Stuttgart. When I am not currently attending a seminar, you can hear me on the radio.

My relationship with the IB VAP began around 10 years ago. I had the great privilege of living and volunteering in Saltillo in Northern Mexico for a year, in the Casa del Migrante. As a volunteer, I was already enthusiastic about the way the seminars were structured and was able to make use of this enthusiasm first as a returnee, and now as an educator. The philosophy of the IB VAP team is amazing, I love that they emphasize human kindness, honesty, transparency, and authenticity. These aspects make the work with the teams and volunteers truly 'magical'.

I could give a lot of examples to prove this point, however, that would go beyond the scope of this newsletter ;) But there is always a lot of laughter involved...

As an educator, I can relate the experiences from my own voluntary service to my work and am able to give something back to the organization. This is the motivation that still drives me to prepare young adults for their year abroad, to participate in mid-term seminars, and to support returnees and listen to their stories. The critical reflection on topics like post-colonialism, the voluntary service, etc. give us the opportunity to take a broader view and question things.

Personally, I think it is great that I can join seminars and don't have to fit into a specific box. The educators are allowed to make mistakes, to contribute their strengths and interests to the program, and to organize each seminar as fits the needs of the participants. I greatly appreciate that these possibilities are given to us when working with the IB VAP. Although the two VAP teams are very different, they also share similarities – which is why colleagues become friends.

Happy Birthday dear IB VAP Franken and IB VAP Kassel, and congratulations on 15 years of outstanding work! You are amazing, thank you for trusting me and allowing me to participate... I am looking forward to the next seminars with great people. And I am excited for the next time "we'll be going on a dragon hunt..." ;)

Walter Schulz, educator IB VAP

### the teams

#### IB VAP BADEN – FROM THE BLACK FOREST TO SOUTH AMERICA

In summer 2017, the first four volunteers from the IB VAP Baden were sent to Peru to participate in the "weltwärts"-program. Stefanie Santa had the idea to turn the IB Baden into a sending organization for international voluntary services. The young coordinator had previously taken over the task of reorganizing the national voluntary services at the IB location Offenburg. Since she herself had participated in a voluntary service in a children's home in Cusco, which had had a long-lasting effect on her, she was motivated to create international volunteering opportunities in Peru.

Following a lot of research about the framework and guidelines, as well as constant communication with and active support from the teams IB VAP Kassel and Franken, the first visit at the host organizations Casa Verde Arequipa and Casa Verde Cusco took place in February 2017.

Since then, fourteen volunteers have left to South America with the IB VAP Baden to participate in projects with children and adolescents with difficult backgrounds. In these projects, the volunteers engage in playing and teaching; they support the children in everyday routines and spend time with them. For many volunteers, the highlight of their year is the week they spend at the beach with the children, many of whom have never been close to the sea before.

This year is the third year in which the IB VAP Baden has sent volunteers to Peru. Currently, six young adults are volunteering there. They receive support from the pedagogical worker Steffen Czyzewski, who is the new representative of the IB VAP Baden. In line with the cooperation between the different IB VAP teams, we organize many of our seminars together with the IB VAP Franken.



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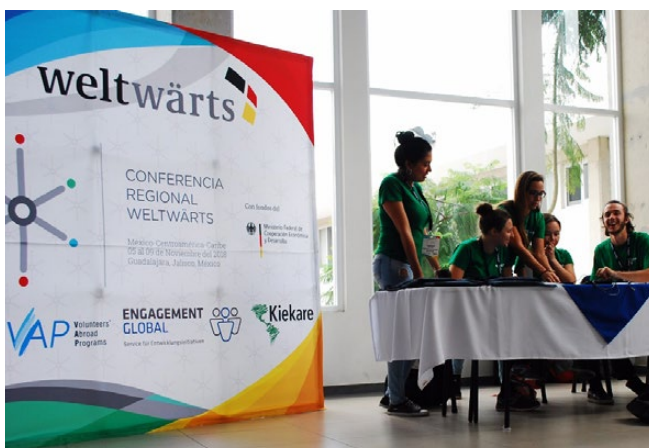
## "WELTWÄRTS" - PARTNER CONFERENCE IN MEXICO – TRUE SOLIDARITY

Since 2012, conferences with partner organizations from the "weltwärts"-program have been held in different countries around the world. During these conferences, the partner organizations can discuss the current development of the program, contribute to advancing the program and get into contact with other organizations. The conferences support the communication and exchange between the partners operating abroad and the Program Steering Committee (PSA), the decision-making body of the "weltwärts"-program.

2018 was the first year in which a regional conference for partner organizations took place in Mexico. From November 5-9, 2018, the IB VAP Franken and its partner organization Kiekare held the conference in Guadalajara. Around 50 participants were invited to join: mentors, assignment locations, and sending organizations from Mexico, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Germany, and the Dominican Republic. The conference focused on the UN Sustainable Development Goals, security, difficulties regarding the support for volunteers, and challenges related to sending South-North volunteers to Germany.

A major topic during the conference was the group's concern about the political situation in Nicaragua. Critics of the regime are increasingly facing political persecution by president Ortega; centers for torture have been established and the number of people that go missing after engaging in political activism is rising. The Nicaraguan participants wrote a common document explaining the situation in their country. It was given to the political representative of the "weltwärts"-program, Anette Chammas, who presented the document to federal minister Dr. Gerd Müller from the BMZ (German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development). All participants developed ideas and concrete plans to show their solidarity. Through these actions, the "weltwärts" partner conference turned into a place of true solidarity and human kindness.

Kornelia Bodach, IB VAP Franken



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### poem

AARTI BEDARKAR

*My feet landed with the aircraft  
Smoothly touching new ground  
My mind was full of anticipation  
Filled with its own sound  
I took a deep breath  
As I breathed the new air  
The enormity of that moment  
Was almost too much to bear  
Was I really there ?  
Was this really true ?  
For a moment I shuddered  
Everything was new!  
All I had was myself (it seemed)  
And a year ahead of me  
And the biggest question on my mind  
Was how it would all be!  
Today I'm more than three months through  
And it simply feels untrue  
Wasn't it yesterday that I landed here  
With fears not so few?  
Sure there have been times  
When all I could think was "Home!"  
If only I could return  
To the land and people I've known!  
These feelings have come and gone  
And certainly they will come and go  
It is of their going that you can be sure  
Also with time you will know  
Every moment is progress  
Every day brand new  
Take it as it comes  
And you will simply glide through!  
The year will seem not so long  
With only twelve months in hand  
And you will want to have some more  
Of this now familiar land  
And again as your feet will land with the aircraft  
Smoothly touching home ground  
Your mind will be full of memories  
And a magical new sound !*

Aarti Bedarkar, one of the first South-North volunteers



### AN UNFORGETTABLE EXPERIENCE – MENTOR MEETING IN NUREMBERG

My name is Sonia and I am from Ecuador, a beautiful country. I am 45 years old and I have been working as a mentor for the IB for five years now. For me, supporting the volunteers in all kind of situations has been an experience for life.

Additionally, the IB VAP team made a dream come true for me and other mentors by providing us with an unforgettable experience: a mentor training in Germany from July 5-13, 2018. Finally, the starting date of this adventure had arrived. We spent the days together with other mentors from Argentina, Costa Rica, Mexico, Ecuador, Nicaragua, and Germany, and I adapted to the structure without realizing that I had already become part of it – between work, laughter, open discussions with other colleagues and people that told us about their experiences and took us on journeys to incredible places.

I realized that it was a perfect opportunity for me to understand the position of my volunteers, who, outside of their routines, had to adapt to the daily life in another culture.

I understood that this journey was an enriching and unforgettable experience, which exceeded my expectations.

Sonia Jacome, mentor IB VAP



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Chairman of the Executive Board  
Valentin-Senger-Straße 5  
60389 Frankfurt (Main)

Responsible offices:

IB VAP Franken  
Schanzäcker Str. 10, 90443 Nürnberg  
Phone +49 911 9453632  
VAP-Franken@internationaler-bund.de  
www.facebook.com/ib.vap

IB VAP Kassel  
Königsplatz 57, 34117 Kassel  
Phone +49 561 574637-0  
VAP-Kassel@internationaler-bund.de

Volunteers' Abroad Programs  
www.ib-freiwilligendienste.de

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www.internationaler-bund.de  
The organization is part of the IB Group

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