

# Getting Started as a Volunteer

Volunteers have become an invaluable resource for organizations and projects. But volunteering should be a rewarding experience for you, too. We want to make sure that you're all set for getting started as a volunteer, so here are some tips for you.

## What does a volunteer do

- Volunteering is **voluntary, unpaid, done for others**, and takes place **in public and community spaces**.
- Volunteer work is **open to all** and does not depend on employment status, residence titles, qualifications, age (the minimum age for volunteers is typically 14, some programmes for children accept volunteers as young as 6 years of age).
- Special types of volunteering: **short-term volunteering, digital volunteering, mentoring, volunteer groups**.

## How to find volunteering opportunities that are the right fit for you

There's such a broad range of opportunities, there's bound to be something for you!

- Before looking for volunteering opportunities, take a moment to **think about** what you want (i. e. Why do I want to volunteer? What am I particularly interested in? Which community would I like to work with? How much time do I want to spend volunteering? What do I expect from the organization I'd like to volunteer with?).
- Find **volunteering opportunities** through the free volunteering consultation service, the Freiwilligen-Agentur's online database or through your own research.
- Get in touch with the organization, schedule an **initial consultation** and, possibly, a **trial period** for volunteering with them.
- Afterwards, both sides will decide whether they'd like to work together.

## A good volunteering framework

- **Volunteer Coordination:** Having a permanent contact person and clearly defined tasks, as well as receiving instructions and support contribute to a rewarding volunteering experience.
- Inquire about the possibility of signing a **volunteer agreement**.
- **Insurance:** Make sure to check which liability and accident insurance applies in the event of damage.
- **Expenses:** You can be reimbursed for costs incurred during your volunteer work.
- **Allowance:** If the organization pays you a lump-sum allowance (§26/26a EStG), check whether and to what extent the lump sum will be discounted from social benefits, if you receive any.



- **Certificate of Good Conduct:** When working with children and young people or other vulnerable groups, an extended certificate of good conduct (*erweitertes Führungszeugnis*) is required (valid for 3 months). You can obtain this document at the Citizens' Registration Office (*Bürgeramt*); if the organization confirms, the costs can be covered by the local authority.
- A **Health Certificate** is required when handling food. You'll have to talk to the organization you're volunteering with to find out whether they can cover the costs for the certificate.
- **Volunteer Certificate:** Ask for proof of the work you have done, which you can then use for job applications, for example.

### Additional Information

- **Freiwilligen-Agentur Leipzig e.V.** Free Volunteering Consultation and Online Search [www.freiwilligen-agenur-leipzig.de](http://www.freiwilligen-agenur-leipzig.de)
- **Information on Volunteering from the City of Leipzig** [www.leipzig.de/engagiert](http://www.leipzig.de/engagiert)
- **Insurance for Volunteers from the Free State of Saxony** [www.ehrenamt.sachsen.de/versicherungsschutz-fuer-ehrenamtlich-engagierte.html](http://www.ehrenamt.sachsen.de/versicherungsschutz-fuer-ehrenamtlich-engagierte.html)
- **Brochure "Zu Ihrer Sicherheit" (About your Safety) from the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs** [www.bmas.de/DE/Service/Publikationen/Broschueren/a329-zu-ihrer-sicherheit-unfallversichert-im-ehrenamt.html](http://www.bmas.de/DE/Service/Publikationen/Broschueren/a329-zu-ihrer-sicherheit-unfallversichert-im-ehrenamt.html)
- **Overview of frequently asked questions about volunteering from the Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community** [www.bmi.bund.de/DE/themen/heimat-integration/buergerschaftliches\\_engagement/haeufige-fragen-und-antworten/haeufige-fragen-und-antworten-node.html](http://www.bmi.bund.de/DE/themen/heimat-integration/buergerschaftliches_engagement/haeufige-fragen-und-antworten/haeufige-fragen-und-antworten-node.html)
- **Fifth German Volunteer Survey 2019** [www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/themen/engagement\\_und\\_gesellschaft/engagement-staerken/freiwilligensurveys/der-deutsche-freiwilligensurvey-100090](http://www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/themen/engagement_und_gesellschaft/engagement-staerken/freiwilligensurveys/der-deutsche-freiwilligensurvey-100090)

If you have any questions or encounter any problems, you can contact us at any time. The Freiwilligen-Agentur (*Volunteer Agency*) is your point of contact for all aspects of volunteering.

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