



Federal Ministry for  
Family Affairs, Senior Citizens,  
Women and Youth



# Youth Voluntary Services

Two ways to open up new perspectives

**Voluntary Social Service Year**

**Voluntary Ecological Service Year**

## **Voluntary Social Service Year** (*Freiwilliges Soziales Jahr, FSJ*)

## **Voluntary Ecological Service Year** (*Freiwilliges Ökologisches Jahr, FÖJ*)

### **What's it about and what will I gain from Youth Voluntary Service?**

Youth Voluntary Services offer young people and young adults the chance to develop new prospects for their own futures and to do something good for others and for society.

During the FSJ or FÖJ, you can gather extensive practical experience in a work area of your choice. It will offer you an initial insight into everyday working life and give you the opportunity to discover and contribute your own personal strengths and interests.

### **A FSJ or FÖJ will upgrade your CV!**

Volunteers can receive a skills certificate at the end of their year if they wish. Potential employers place great value on applicants' voluntary commitment, not least because volunteers have already had a taste of working life. It can therefore increase your chances of finding a training position. Voluntary service can also have advantages when applying for universities or colleges.

### **Am I part of your target group?**

The FSJ and the FÖJ are aimed at young people between the ages of 16 and 26, irrespective of gender, religion, type of school leaving certificate or nationality. Both services are open to foreigners already living in Germany and to young people who come here specifically for this purpose ("incomers").





### Service period

You will generally spend 12 months in the Youth Voluntary Services, or 18 months at most. Exceptionally, this period can be shortened to 6 months or extended to 24 months. Volunteers have a statutory right to holiday (with a 12-month service period, for example, at least 24 days holiday). FSJ/FÖJ-volunteers essentially work full-time.

## An overview of work areas

You can choose from the following areas of work:



### Social Sector

e.g. after-school facility, youth club, facility for elderly or disabled people, emergency services, support for the homeless, hospital



### Ecological sector

e.g. bird sanctuary, national park, environmental education centre



### Culture

e.g. museum, theatre project, cultural association, archaeological dig, preservation of historic monuments



### Education

e.g. homework supervision, tuition project, school, open all-day school



### Sport

e.g. sports association, children's exercise group, sporting leisure facilities



### Integration and inclusion

e.g. inclusion of people with disabilities, integration of people with immigrant backgrounds, refugee aid

## Where will I find the right place to work?

Every work place is assigned to a recognised provider who can provide overall information about the areas of work, the application process and additional formalities.

The contact details of providers are available at [www.pro-fsj.de](http://www.pro-fsj.de) for the FSJ and [www.foej.de](http://www.foej.de) for the FÖJ. You will find a general list of all the contact points on the web page of the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth at <https://www.bmfsfj.de/blob/96722/77c298b106313bd21f30a77d753ebc28/fsj-foej-anlaufstellen-data.pdf>.

### Further information:

If you have any basic questions, you can also contact the “Youth Voluntary Services Centre” at the Federal Office of Family Affairs and Civil Society Functions: [jfd-servicestelle@bafza.bund.de](mailto:jfd-servicestelle@bafza.bund.de). [www.jugendfreiwilligendienste.de](http://www.jugendfreiwilligendienste.de) also offers further information about the FSJ and FÖJ. It is gradually being translated into English.

## How does it differ from “normal” work?

The training days are an important element of the FSJ/FÖJ, and the number of training days depends on the length of service. If the service period is a year, you have a total of 25 training days.

The training days are generally offered as week-long seminars. This means that the volunteers spend several days together at a place where they learn, eat and even share accommodation. The subject areas covered in these seminars vary considerably and are often jointly chosen with the volunteers or partly designed by the volunteers.

Training days are work time, so you do not need to use your holidays to attend. The place where you work as a volunteer will release you for the seminars. Travel costs, food and accommodation are paid for.

During your entire FSJ/FÖJ, an education expert will be on hand to support you.



## Useful information

### Who can take part?

Anyone who has completed full-time compulsory schooling and is under the age of 27.



People who have had to flee from their own countries and who do not have any proof of their school education can provide a credible written declaration of their school career instead.

A knowledge of German is not necessary in every case. Please find out beforehand from the workplace and provider which language skills are required.

**Incomers:** Volunteers who come to Germany to take part in a voluntary service must provide proof beforehand that they have the means to live in Germany.

People from most third-party states will also additionally need a national visa in the form of a work visa to be able to enter Germany, as well as a residence permit to be able to stay.

### Access to FSJ/FÖJ for refugees

Recognised asylum seekers who have received positive notification from the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees may basically pursue employment without limitation and thus start a FSJ/FÖJ without special permission from the foreigners authorities.

For people who are in an ongoing asylum process (permission to remain) or who hold a temporary suspension of deportation, the determining factor is whether the permit from the foreigners authority to take up employment has been granted. Approval from the Employment Agency is not necessary.

### How much money does a volunteer receive?



All volunteers receive pocket money during their service. Accommodation, food and work clothing may be provided or reimbursed financially.

### Social security



You have social security insurance in the FSJ and FÖJ. This is particularly important if you become ill or have an accident.

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