



## Visiting Germany as an exchange student with aubiko

Since 2001, the members of aubiko have worked with great enthusiasm in student exchange for various different exchange organisations. We have combined our versatile experience and founded the non-profit organisation aubiko e.V. in Hamburg, Germany to be able to offer you the best student exchange we can.

Sending your own child abroad can be a big step. In order to assure the natural parents that their child is in good hands with us, we pay special attention to the following points:

### 1. Careful selection and counselling of the host family

We pay a personal visit to our host families and advise them on the student exchange in a two- to three-hour conversation. During this visit, we take a look at their home, the surrounding neighbourhood and the local school. In the course of the conversation, we do not solely explain the exchange programme to the host family but we also gather impressions on whether the family is prepared to host an exchange student. Experience has shown that in addition to hospitality and willingness, openness and flexibility are indispensable. If, for example, expectations of the exchange student are too high or we notice there are family difficulties, then we do not consider these families suitable hosts. It is also very important to us that the families trust us, so they contact us if difficulties arise.

### 2. Care of the host family and exchange student

Two to three weeks after the arrival of the exchange student, we pay another visit to the family and get in contact with his supervising teacher. During the visit we have a joint conversation and afterwards talk to the student and the family individually. In case we detect any misunderstandings or problems, we help to find a solution. One example could be, that the family needs to set up clearer rules or they need to encourage their student to express his wishes. We will talk about expectations, perceptions and cultural aspects. In the end, it is these conversations and reflections that allow both parties to develop their intercultural skills.



In the course of one semester we arrange three telephone appointments. This constant contact serves to show the student, that we're there for him. He should contact us at any time if he has any problems so that we can put him in touch with a member of staff that is familiar to him. If it is necessary, we will pay another visit to the family at any time to make sure that a solution to the problem is found. We can be reached 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Everyone is given the telephone number of our office as well as our mobile phone numbers.

### **3. It doesn't always have to work out**

Mostly, things are running smoothly and both parties benefit from the exchange. However, it can happen that despite a wonderful family and a highly motivated and open-minded student, one of the two of them is unhappy with the arrangement. Of course, we are trying to understand both parties and work together with them on finding a solution. But if, for example, the mutual trust has been violated or "the chemistry is just not right, it is best to change host families. Naturally, we want the students to know that a host family is no hotel room that can be cancelled or easily exchanged. On the other hand, we don't want to enforce an unhappy stay and we are open to necessary changes of host families. Sometimes, the student only needs a second chance to show himself from his best side. And this chance should be given to him.

### **4. Regular reports from the beginning on**

Once we have found a family for the student, he will get a detailed placement letter. In this letter we will introduce the host family, the region and the school the student will visit. We want the student and the natural parents to know as exactly as possible where the journey is heading and to get an idea of the new environment.

After the arrival of the student, we will visit the host family again. This visit will be documented in writing. Another detailed report will follow after the first half of the programme is over and at any time problems arise that could be of relevance to the natural parents.



## 5. Worries, problems and questions

Worries, problems and questions are taken very seriously by us - no matter whether they come from students, natural parents of host families. We will use our years of expertise to counsel and advise as best we can. However, the most important thing is to listen to all parties. No one knows his child as well as its natural parents. Only the exchange student himself can let others know how he feels. The host family is best able to estimate how they perceive the child in the new surrounding. The same situation can be described very differently. We know there is no such thing as “a right estimation” and therefore try to take all sides and information into account when trying to find a solution. In order for this to work, good cooperation of all parties involved is necessary.

## 6. Preparation seminar in Berlin

After the arrival in Germany, we offer a three-day preparation seminar to all exchange students. At this seminar, we will try to prepare the students for daily life in a German family and the attendance of a German school. We will also provide intercultural training and talk about the course of the exchange programme. During the seminar, there will also be the possibility to discover Berlin and we will throw a little welcome party. The time spent together gives us the opportunity to get to know all students on a personal level and to answer all of their questions. Before the seminar, all students are going to be provided with a student manual.

## 7. Insurance

All students have a valid medical insurance, liability insurance and accident insurance.

## 8. Arrival and departure

The students will be picked up from the airport and then brought to the train, which takes them to their host families. They will all be helped with their luggage and be brought to the seat in their train.

## 9. End of the programme

The programme ends with the last day of school in the respective federal state the student is staying in.

## 10. Scholarships

The scholarship will be given by aubiko or by a German company. In addition to a application for the scholarship, the scholarship holders are asked to write about their exchange experiences in a blog/travel diary or similar. During their stay the fellowship holders have the possibility to gain an insight into the German company.

\* In favour of a more comfortable reading flow, we have only used the masculine form. Of course, all addressees are included.

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