



**EUROPEAN
SOLIDARITY
CORPS**

**HOSTING PROJECT –
ACTIVITY WORKER @ KLEIN KASTEELTJE
BELGIUM FLANDERS
AFS INTERCULTURELE PROGRAMMA'S VZW**

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I General info on projects in BFL

Age limits: 18-30 years.

Number of volunteers: Most of the projects only host one volunteer.

Application deadline: See project details

Hosting: Participants will be primarily hosted in a host family, but staying in an own accommodation or at the work place is also an option, depending on the project. Please do know that our host families are not necessarily living within walking or biking distance of the project. Be aware that the volunteer might have to commute and that the travel time from his/her/their home to the project might take a while (with a max. of 1 hour). Especially, when the project is situated in a large city (like Brussels, Antwerp or Ghent), it's very likely that the volunteer will be hosted in the suburbs and not in the city centre.

Language: The will to learn **Dutch** is a very important aspect. We expect people to be dedicated to learn Dutch. In most projects the motivation to learn Dutch fast is a requirement. We will offer online and offline Dutch language courses, but motivation remains the most important factor to communicate at ease. A good communicative knowledge of English is also desirable and sometimes required. All communication with AFS BFL is done in English. Depending on the volunteer work one wants to do, in most projects it is necessary to have a very good level of communication skills in English.

Travel: For most projects, arriving to Brussels National Airport (airport code = BRU) is the best option when the volunteer is taking a plane. Of course other options and green travel is also possible and sometimes recommended. We will provide the volunteer with personalised travel advice in due course.

II Activity worker @ Klein Kasteeltje

City: Brussels

Period of the project: 1st June to 31st December 2023

Application Deadline: 15th March 2023

Accommodation: Host family or own accommodation

Activities and mission of the organisation:

Klein Kasteeltje is a reception centre for asylum seekers. There are two different types of reception centres in Belgium: open centres and closed centres. In closed centres, free circulation is not permitted outside the centre. We are an open centre, which means asylum seekers are free to come in and leave as they wish. They usually stay at the centre while waiting for the ministry of Foreign Affairs to inspect their files and papers. Most of the refugees stay at Klein Kasteeltje for a minimum of three to six months. In some cases they may stay for a couple of years or even more.

We try to cooperate with all parties to guarantee a professional and respectful approach to providing shelter. We offer the refugees an appropriate framework and orientation to help them shape their future.

At the moment 400 asylum seekers are living at Klein Kasteeltje, which makes it the largest open centre of Belgium. The refugees sleep in dorms (if they've arrived alone) or in private apartments (if they've arrived with their family). Most of them are single men, but there are women, families and even unaccompanied minors. Their nationalities are very diverse. Most of them come from Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, Serbia and Slovenia.

Sector of the organisation: **minorities**

Location of the project:

Klein Kasteeltje is located in the heart of Brussels. In the neighbourhood live a lot of people with different nationalities. Our buildings are a former army base next to the canal of Brussels. The neighbourhood is a little run-down, but it is slowly being renovated. As it typically happens in Brussels, in less than a 5-minute walk you can enter a historic quarter with renovated buildings and some of the most expensive shops in the city. Although Brussels is the capital of Belgium and of Europe, it is still a city where one can live at ease. Its rich cultural scene, together with its patchwork of nationalities, professions and religions, give Brussels a unique character.

Workplace environment:

Klein Kasteeltje employs 120 staff members, both French and Dutch speaking. The volunteer will be in direct contact with 8 staff members (both French and Dutch speaking) from the team of Werk Opleiding Vrije Tijd (WOVT).

What the volunteer can expect:

Our reception centre strives for intercultural contacts. We think it's important that asylum seekers take part in cultural exchange as well by meeting other foreigners in Belgium and comparing each other's integration process. Thanks to international volunteers, Klein Kasteeltje is able to organise activities that we wouldn't be able to carry out otherwise. Since volunteers can spend a lot of time together with the asylum seekers, they feel more welcome and at ease.

Volunteers are better suited to express the peculiarity and values of each person because they don't represent an authority or an institution. Volunteers are an essential help and contribute to the quality of the asylum seekers' stay. The voluntary service of Klein Kasteeltje states that "volunteers make little extras possible in order to change the asylum seekers' stay for the better and to help those in difficult situations".

Tasks of the volunteer:

There are different ways to help out as a volunteer at Klein Kasteeltje. However, the volunteer will mainly be working in the WOVT team, as this role demands a minimum number of skills upon arrival and offers the most opportunities for participation and innovation.

Possible activities in the WOVT team:

- organising activities for adults and minors
- sport activities for adults (mainly soccer, volleyball, table tennis, fitness)
- language classes: French, Dutch, English
- other classes: sewing, dancing, painting
- IT: helping out with starting up computers, helping find information about the country of origin
- daily life orientation: how to take a bus, how to read a card
- social help: trying to find an apartment, talking to the owners, helping out the refugees with administrative work, visiting ill people

A lot of activities can be organised at the centre. There's enough choice for every personality with its unique competences. Every project from a volunteer will be welcomed. The activities will be looked at in detail to see what's feasible. Important to bear in mind though is that the proposed projects depend on the preference of the refugees. For example: the volunteer might be interested in organising a dramatic art workshop, but if none of the refugees are interested, the volunteer should be flexible enough to put emphasis on other aspects.

Working hours during a normal day:

The volunteer will work at the centre from Monday to Friday, usually from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Some activities will take place on weekends (day trips).

Specific requirements:

The centre welcomes all sorts of profiles. It's important however that the volunteer has at least basic knowledge of French or English. However, not all our residents speak French or English, so communication can sometimes be difficult. Because of the high number of other volunteers and staff members, it may not always be easy to fully feel at ease. That's why a volunteer with a lot of autonomy and sense for initiative has more chances to feel at ease. Refugees aren't always too enthusiastic for the proposed activities. That's why it's

important that the volunteer isn't immediately discouraged when facing an obstacle. He/she should have some strength to keep going and some flexibility to adapt to the circumstances.

Required language skills: intermediate knowledge of French or English

Required vaccinations: hepatitis A & B

Volunteer's benefit:

The main advantage of volunteering at Klein Kasteeltje is that we offer so many opportunities: leisure activities, administration, medical care, education,... We can discuss together which activity you feel most comfortable with. Besides enjoying the intercultural exchange with the refugees, the volunteer will also learn to work in a bilingual team. He/she will learn to develop entertainment skills, a sense of organisation and of autonomy. Last but not least, he/she will also have the opportunity to learn about the asylum policy in Belgium and will get an insight into the long and difficult road asylum seekers have to walk.