

Description

The Switch is a centre for youngsters, that through different circumstances, cannot live at home and attend regular school. For most of them it is not easy to get in a normal school setting after a lot of failing. The Switch is a centre that gives, through his setting, time and space for the youngsters to find or redefine their interests and capacities. It also gives them the opportunity to do something with their traumatic past and create a new perspective in the future.

The Switch is situated in a house in a small village Sint Pieters - Rode. The youngsters live together in a cosy house with kitchen, living rooms, space for therapy and workshop. In the Switch a team of 12 persons live and work with the girls. The team of social workers is running the residential setting and the follow up of the girls living in the Switch. They are there to facilitate group life and the individual questions of the girls during their stay. Some of them have their own hobbies and capacities like art, music, work with wood to create there a space of different activities. The volunteers are bringing also other activities with them like sports, garden, handcrafts... The youngsters are aged between 14 and 18 years old. The girls are staying there for approximately 6 months to one year. The average amount of girls that lives in the Switch is 6, with a maximum of 8.

The Switch is created by his mother organization, De Wissel. This is an association that is part of the wellness network for youngsters with social problems in Flanders, Belgium. De Wissel is helping girls between 14 and 21 years old, girls with a difficult social background caused by different reasons. Often there is a multiply effect that makes that these girls already attended different centers of youth care in several years. Because of different problems, bad experiences in their life they lost confidence in the society and adults. De Wissel wants to create a setting for these girls that gives them the possibilities to open themselves and change their distrust into trust. From the beginning, when a girl arrives in De Wissel, the context (family, friends, school...) will be involved in the process. A flexible organization and a multipurpose aid is necessary in a setting like this to enhance the chance of reaching the formulated goals.

https://www.facebook.com/de.switch?ref=br_rs

The volunteer will have the opportunity to learn about:

Working with socially disadvantaged youngsters and experience how social work is organised in Belgium.

Some pedagogical methods used in the project to work with non-motivated youngsters
Have the opportunity to develop an own project and experience personal growth in this experience.

Work on a day centre in rural setting and taking care of the environment

Dutch language

The role of EVS volunteers in the host organisation:

The volunteer that we are looking for, will be a member of our daily work, as we have to work very individual with the girls. He/she will work in a schedule of about 35 hours a week (dutch lessons included). The EVS'er can participate to the organisations' life during some days and evenings and take responsibility for tasks (cooking, driving a girl to the doctor's, hold the house clean), but a big part of the time he/she should invite the youngsters to do activities, show hospitality... 'Being in the house doing normal daily things and invite the girls to take part of this instead being occupied by their personal problems' is the most important thing we are asking. Therefore we need a person who speaks good English, who has

enough social skills to realise contacts with the girls , invite them, motivate..., who can stand that the girls (because of their problems) don't react/handle allways in a kind way. The EVS'er also needs to have a license to drive and have enough experience on the way. Also practical skills are rewarded: able to cook a healty meal for 8 persons in a short time, to work on his own, take initiative. And he/she also has the possibility to use personal skills and interests: musical, creative, multimedia ... to organise workshops for the girls. As we work with individual trajects , flexibility is very important.

A part of the working schedule will be fixed: wednesday afternoon do courses, participate/organise activities, friday afternoon working in the house: cleaning, organising... , two evenings live and act with us in the living space of the girls, dividing the responsibilities and the tasks with the staff on that moment. Some part of the job will be 'on the moment', p.e. when we need somebody to drive a girl to a camp, to a dentist.... According to the skills and the interests of the EVS'er he/she can organise workshops/day program. Tree times in the year we organize a camp where the volunteer will help to support activities and logistic matters.

Profile of the volunteer

A volunteer with sence for working with teenagers (girls) in difficult situations.

We want the volunteer to be aware of his influences to these youngsters. Able to deal with young adults and have social skills to communicate with these youngsters. Being open minded and flexible in this work are very welcome. As he/she is working in the surrounding of youngsters with difficulties, he/she has to understand that all kind of problems he/she gets to know from the youngsters are private and not to be communicated outside the project.

Creative volunteers that have ideas for projects, activities or have knowledge of certain issues that can give an extra dimension to the project are very welcome.

We expect an independence in the work where the volunteer learns to plan his work, takes initiative and can see work and take actions by him/herself.

The volunteer has to be willing to evolve to an independent way of living in the community. There won't be all the time a mentor to take care of cooking, going somewhere,...

We prefer a volunteer that makes the choice for a long term. We have an introduction month in august wit hall EVS volunteers. This to make sure the volunteer has the time to integrate and build up knowledge, independence and integration in the project.

We want to give the volunteer time to integrate, get experienced in his/her tasks, communicate, create projects and go home with a rich experience. We think that experiencing the whole cyclus of one year will be the most successful experience of this project. So we prefer volunteers that go for this long term experience of 1 year!(minnum till end of June)

Where are we looking for:

mature enough to organise your work independent after a while

Motivated to take initiative in small things, proposing activities,...

mature enough to deal with the youngsters, get along with non-motivated youngsters with behaviour problems.

able to live in rural setting (not in a city, nearest city Leuven is 12km)

- transport is by bus and bike, train station 6km from the house

- independent in living, cooking, taking care of yourself

- live in community with others, share places in common with others except your sleeping

room ;)

- willing to learn Dutch (Nederlands)

practical arrangements

Food:

The volunteer has to organise him/herself for breakfast and/or dinner with the budget he/she will get from the project. He/She will get a budget each month for the rest of the food expenses. Lunch and/or dinner will be taken together in the centre on working days.

Accommodation:

The volunteer will have a room that he/she can lock with a key. Bathroom and kitchen are in common with other volunteers. There is an internet connection which can be used.

The volunteer lives 2km from his/her working spot.

Holidays:

The volunteer has the right to take holiday. He/She should mention this in advance on a staffmeeting so we can arrange it in the schedule of tasks. If he/she wants to take a week off, he/she should discuss this in advance with the team. The volunteer has the right on vacation 2 days in the week (mostly weekend) and 25 extra days during the whole year.

Local Transport:

There will be a bike for the volunteer to go to the shop, the bus or train station. There is a bus passing every hour at 2km from the house.

The volunteer will get an bus pass to travel by bus in whole Flanders.

Language training: The organisations provides support in the language by a teacher or subscription in a school nearby.

He / She will have the opportunity to have Dutch classes. The lessons will be organised to the arrival date.