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Report

My time as a volunteer at Eine Welt Forum, part of the VAMOS program, has been an enriching, eye-opening journey filled with cultural discoveries, meaningful work, and personal growth. Leaving South Africa and moving to Germany marked the beginning of a completely new chapter in my life—one where I was eager to gain skills, contribute to a broader mission, and meet new people. Yet, despite my excitement, the experience of being far from home brought unexpected challenges, from cultural shocks to language barriers. Reflecting on these experiences, I find myself immensely grateful for the learning and opportunities I've encountered, even in the face of difficulties.

Adjusting to a new culture and navigating Culture Shock has been a big one for me. Germany has been both fascinating and overwhelming in equal measure. Coming from South Africa, I initially found myself struck by the different pace, societal norms, and communication styles. It was in the little things like the punctuality ingrained in daily life or the quietness that seemed to permeate public spaces that I felt the most significant differences. The structure and formality that characterize German society contrasted with my more flexible and dynamic background, and I felt myself constantly adjusting. Yet, I welcomed these challenges because I knew that this is a completely unknown and new environment and being in Europe means I am learning a completely new culture, way of thinking and new people.

These adjustments were especially intense during the first two weeks, which were packed with an introductory seminar. Thankfully, the seminar offered much more than just orientation; it provided me with a foundation to better understand the people around me and gain insights into German culture, such as discipline, people really appreciate that you're on time. The information we covered was both practical and inspiring, and I felt my enthusiasm for the program grow as I learned more about the mission and purpose of the VAMOS initiative. This time was also pivotal in helping me connect with fellow volunteers, including those from PERU. We bonded quickly, sharing our personal backgrounds, values, and a common drive to make a positive impact. It was comforting and empowering to know that I was surrounded by people with similar ambitions to create a better. It is still quite difficult with the language but a way I have overcome it, is to try and listen well. Often you catch what people are saying.

For the past two months I have been trying to build connections and create a "Home" Away from Home. Learning German has been, without a doubt, one of the most challenging aspects of my time here. While I was eager to pick up the language before arriving, the reality of not having formal classes for the past two weeks has made progress slower than I anticipated. I often find myself straining to understand conversations or missing nuances that would have been obvious in my native language. Despite these challenges, I'm committed to maintaining a positive attitude and using every opportunity to practice, whether by chatting with locals, reading signs, or simply absorbing words and phrases from everyday interactions. This journey with the language has also made me more aware of the patience and understanding that intercultural communication requires, and I am determined to keep improving.

While volunteering I have stated that I want to be Contributing to Meaningful Work and Personal Fulfilment at Eine Welt Forum. Since their work is heavily based on the impacts of social injustice and climate change, I am able to learn so much that I hope to also work on such projects in the future. I have always worked with teenage girls, and I led writing workshops on these topics. Now that I am volunteering at Eine Welt, I am receiving more depth into the topics, and it is strengthening my knowledge. At Eine Welt Forum, my work has been rewarding, especially because I am involved in tasks that align with my passions and skill. One project that stands out was producing a video for the forum, which was needed for a funding initiative. The positive feedback I received on the video gave me a profound sense of accomplishment and reinforced my commitment to making a meaningful impact. Being able to contribute in such tangible ways is deeply fulfilling; it reminds me of why I am here and inspires me to keep pushing forward, even on challenging days.

Each task I take on feels like a step closer to the personal and professional growth I had hoped to achieve. Working with an organization that strives to make the world a better place aligns perfectly with my own values, and it's energizing to be surrounded by people who share a common purpose. The VAMOS program has also helped shape my perspective, reminding me of the importance of mindfulness in how I approach each experience. This opportunity to contribute while reflecting on my own beliefs and attitudes has been transformative, encouraging me to grow into a person who is resilient, empathetic, and open to new ideas. I know there will be difficulties, whether in navigating language barriers or adapting to unexpected challenges, but I am confident that I have the strength and resilience to face them. The VAMOS program has given me the tools to cultivate a positive mindset and the support network to encourage me along the way. I am eager to continue learning, growing, and contributing, all while staying grounded in my purpose.

Like everything there is always space for improvement, and I believe that it would have benefitted me so much if I understood the importance of knowing the language. The communication coming here was not that great either, I wish there was better and faster communication. I hope that in the future for the next intake that this happens. In this short time, the experience has shaped not only how I view myself but also how I perceive the world. I am learning that the journey to creating change begins with how we choose to show up each day—with an open heart, an adaptable mindset, and a commitment to growth. I am hopeful that the months ahead will be filled with joy, fulfillment, and the knowledge that, through my work and experiences here, I am contributing to a vision of a better world.