

## **Be part of the Buddy Program**

To be in another country is exciting and promises new, intercultural adventures. But sometimes just looking for a post office or registering with an office can turn into an adventure that we might prefer not to do. It does not have to be like that! In the Buddy Program, the International Office Hildesheim connects international students (incoming buddies) with students from Hildesheim (local buddies) and thus creates a peer-to-peer support service.

### **Who can take part in the Buddy Program?**

International students: The buddy program is open to all exchange students who study in Hildesheim for one or two semesters.

Students from Hildesheim: All students from Hildesheim can become a buddy. Anyone who is in Hildesheim can personally accompany one or more international students during their initial period in Hildesheim. Buddies can be German students or international full-time students (Knowledge of German required). At the time of arrival, the Buddies should be ready to meet the international students personally in Hildesheim. International students usually arrive at the following times:

- Winter semester: end of September
- Summer semester: end of March

### **What does a Buddy from Hildesheim do?**

- pick up from the train station,
- accompany you to the accommodation,
- organization of the key before arrival
- help settling in Hildesheim and with the questions about the organization of everyday life

### **Why should you become a Buddy?**

As a Buddy from Hildesheim

- you will meet students from all over the world
- you can test your foreign language skills
- you contribute to international students feeling welcome in Hildesheim
- certificate of volunteer work as a Buddy

Now it is about the interview of our Buddy partners Maja from Hildesheim and Marie-Louise from Paris.

### **Can you please introduce yourself?**

**Marie-Louise:** I am Marie-Louise, 21 years old and I am from Paris. I am studying translation studies in English, German and French. I am spending my semester abroad here in Hildesheim.

**Maja:** I am Maja, I am studying cultural studies in my sixth semester at the University of Hildesheim. My main artistic subject is music.

### **Why are you part of the Buddy Program?**

**Marie-Louise:** I took part in a similar program in Paris. I also looked after an international student coming to Paris. It was a good feeling to help someone and to show her the city and some of my culture.

Now I am the other side of the program. I get help from a German student. I am very grateful for this program because I am not sure if I would do everything so well without my Buddy partner. In addition, I now have the opportunity to practice German with a native speaker and get to know her culture. It is of course a very important point for me as a translation studies student.

**Maja:** I take part in the Buddy program because I would like to make life and arrival a little easier for the incoming students and I know myself how difficult it is when you are in another country and are supposed to study there and do not know your way around at all. I studied a semester abroad in Marseille / France and had to fight my way through my problems on my own. It was sometimes quite complicated to understand the French system. You just do not go to a lecturer with some questions, you rather ask your friends. Since I did not know anyone at the beginning, I believe that everything would have been a lot easier with a Buddy partner

### **How was your first meeting?**

**Maja:** The first meeting was very nice. Marie-Louise did not arrive until late in the evening. The weather was pretty cold and dark. Then I accompanied her to her student residence. She was in quarantine for the first two weeks, so I helped her with shopping. We met again after her quarantine period. I showed her the city and we went to a café to eat German cheesecake. We had many common topics since I was in France for a semester.

### **What do you like about the Buddy program?**

**Marie-Louise:** I particularly like the fact that the initial contact and encounter developed into a good friendship over the course of the semester and gave me the opportunity to get to know

German culture and practice my foreign language skills. It is a very important aspect, especially during this time when you do not get to know so many people because of the online semester.

**Maja:** I like getting to know people from other countries with whom I might normally not have any contact. Thanks to the Buddy program, I now know one more French girl and she even is from Paris, so if I would like to visit Paris I can get in touch with her.

Another point that I like about the program is that you practice putting yourself in other people's shoes and thinking about how other people feel in this new culture.

### **Which moment will you never forget?**

**Maja:** We had a funny moment when Marie-Louise arrived. The weather was freezing cold and it was not typical for this time of the year. I will never forget that because I felt sorry for Marie-Louise. She was wearing a thin jacket and suddenly - it was early April - it was snowing. I kept saying that this is not normal and that we normally do not have any more snow.

### **How would your semester abroad be without your Buddy?**

**Marie-Louise:** I would very likely have spoken less German and would not have received help as quickly as I did now.

### **What would your tips be for other Buddies?**

**Marie-Louise:** If you need help, just ask. Many international students are probably shy and do not want to be a burden on their buddy and do not even ask them for help or meetings. But I think that all the buddies from Hildesheim want to help, so don't be shy and ask openly if you want to know something or need help.

**Maja:** Ask what the international student needs, what he or she needs help with. Just offer yourself and help and then take the time if you can.

### **Was there anything that surprised you about your Buddy's culture? If yes, what?**

**Marie-Louise:** I have been to Germany before. I did my internship near Berlin, so I knew the culture beforehand. It is the same with Maja, since she had previously spent a semester abroad in France and got to know French culture, she was not surprised either.

### **Thank you for sharing your experience with us.**

If you also want to become a Buddy, then register here:

<https://www.uni-hildesheim.de/io/buddyssprachtandem/>