



Be a volunteer for one year at L'Arche Flanders (Bruges, Ghent or Antwerp)



Change your heart and your life through the relationships with people with learning disabilities



Free volunteering year offered by European Solidarity Corps, funding program from the European Union

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De Ark Vlaanderen

What is L'Arche?

De Ark Vlaanderen is a network of community-based care facilities where people with and without intellectual disabilities live and work together. Relationships are at the heart of our approach. We try to empower people by building a network around them. We work on a small scale to create a more human society and give people opportunities to grow.

De Ark Vlaanderen has several houses near Bruges, Ghent and Antwerp. During the day the people with disabilities goes working in the daycare-center of De Ark or another center in the neighbourhood.

Each community has one of more ESC-volunteers and/or living-in students. We are working close with eachother, so it is easy to make friends with the other volunteers in Flandres. De Ark Vlaanderen is part of the big international network of l'Arche communities, originally founded in 1964 in France.

On our youtubechannel 'De Ark Vlaanderen', you can find several small movies about our communities. One is translated into English, you can find is also on www.ark.vlaanderen/engels



Nikola (left), Dieter (right) and Willem (up) are having fun to decorate Rosita (middle) as a christmas tree

Why do a volunteering year at L'Arche?

- Because it is life-changing!
- You learn a lot about yourself
- You make friends for the rest of your life
- You learn to love and to be loved
- You have fun and learn to appreciate the simple things in life

In fact, you learn how it is to be a human of the heart.



Nikola on a visit in Anja's place



The new bisshop on a visit in L'Arche greets our German volunteer

Who can become a volunteer?

- You are between 18 and 30 years old
- You like to live in a community
- You love to make friends with people who are different than you
- You don't need a special education or degree in social work or pedagogics
- You speak English or French and you are willing to learn Dutch
- Because of the language, we ask you to stay at least 9 months



Hannah (German young volunteer) is going to a football match with Geert (right) to take pictures with his favorite football players



*We received the official Quality Label of the European Commission for the European Solidarity Corps.
We work for more than 25 years with this EU-volunteering program.*

What do we offer?

- A life-changing experience
- Free volunteer year: food, travel costs, pocket money, medical insurance,...
- You can choose to have a room and food for free in the house, you can share an appartement with other ESC-volunteers or you can chose to hosted in a guest-family; we help you to find out what is most suitable for you
- Personal mentoring
- Trainings for young volunteers in L'Arche projects in Flanders & Holland
- Free intensive language course and private language training. If you want, we can organise an online Dutch language course for you before you arrive at L'Arche
- Advanced visit is possible
- The volunteering work is an official project of European Solidarity Corps and is part of the Erasmus+ project of the European Union.
- Family and friends are welcome for a visit during the year



*This year has changed my life forever. I
could grow as a human.*

*Dorothee, German volunteer in De Ark
Moerkerke-Brugge, 2018-2019*

What do you do as a volunteer in L'Arche?

You will share life in our home in De Ark Bruges, Gent or Antwerpen where people with and without disabilities are living and working. By sharing life, going out together, eating at the same table, sharing up and downs in life,... you will participate in the life of the people with disabilities and discover how much you can learn from them. The volunteer feels that solidarity starts with recognizing the independency of people. In the house people with disabilities, other volunteers, students and a paid professional share life together.

The volunteers will be assisting people with intellectual disabilities in their daily life. They will support them where needed, so activities will vary.

1. You will accompany people with disabilities during their leisure time in the evenings and in the weekends. This includes for example: playing a game, cooking and dining together, a community evening, celebrating a birthday party... By sharing these moments, you will develop an emotional bond with the people you're taking care of. This will also help you to learn to cope and communicate with people with disabilities.
2. You will be encouraged to look for activities to do together with the people with learning disabilities and other professionals or volunteers outside the house, f.e. going out to dance, going for a walk, going out for a drink, a visit to the library, going to a festival, the movies, going to a pub,... By going out with the people with learning disabilities, you learn to be open minded to meet other people.
3. You will have space and time during your working-hours to organize a personal project for/with the persons with intellectual disabilities. Something related to your own interests. For example: organize an excursion with the house members; giving a presentation about your country and culture with pictures/stories/typical food/... This will help develop the planning and organisational skills of the participants.
4. You are offered the opportunity to participate in one or more activities of the daycare centre together with a paid professional . The exact activities can be chosen according to your personal interests. Joining the daycare centre activities is not obligatory, it's an offer towards volunteers to enrich their project with activities that are in line with their own hobbies or interests. This will give you the option to use your own skills and interests to enhance the daily life of people with disabilities. It also broadens your experience by working with different people, beyond your house members.
5. You will be invited to help the people with intellectual disabilities in their daily routines. There are nurses from an external organisation coming, but these nurses have a high time pressure. If you help the people with intellectual disabilities you can take time for extras like parfum in the bath, special hairstyles, painting their nails,... Morning routines can include waking people up, helping them get out of bed, getting dressed, helping them in the bathroom, assisting with breakfast,... Evening routines include helping with brushing their teeth and going to bed. If you or the people with disabilities are not feeling comfortable with this, neither is forced to do this (f.e. male volunteers helping female people with disabilities or the other way round). We check on you on a regular basis if you are willing to do this. It can be a good moment for you to build relationships with the people with disabilities who are not so verbal. You can learn important caregiving skills and techniques used in the social sector.

6. You will participate at the different meetings (team meeting, assistants meeting, foyer meeting). These are places to share, to be informed, to organise. Your input is just as important as the input of other team members. You will therefore learn how to formulate an opinion, have a discussion in a constructive way and exchange feedback with colleagues. You will also improve their problem solving skills.
7. You will do household tasks: cleaning, grocery, shopping, doing the dishes,... You will do this together with people with intellectual disabilities and other house members. You will learn what it's like to run a household. By living together and sharing lives, you have the opportunity to be in close contact with the people with disabilities and to learn from each other.



Rosita (left) and Helena cook together



Going to a festival



Helping in the workshop



Planting tomatoes

Presentation of the 3 communities

L'Arche Flanders has 3 local communities near Bruges, Ghent and Antwerp. The way of life and the volunteering year in each community is similar, but has also their own accent.

1. L'Arche Moerkerke-Brugge

They have 2 houses and 1 workshop. House 'De Moerbei' is in the citycenter of Bruges; house 'De Barke' is in the small village of Moerkerke. In each house are living 9 people with disabilities. The daycare center is in Moerkerke. If you choose to be in Moerkerke-Brugge, you will share life with people with disabilities who are settled in life and have a lot of hobby's outside the house. The people with disabilities can easily communicate. To walk for a longer distance, 2 people need a wheelchair.

We are looking for 3 volunteers to share an appartement in Moerkerke or Bruges. You will work in one of the houses or in the workshop. If you love a quiet place and long biking tours, Moerkerke is for you the place to be (12 km to Bruges). If you prefer the liveliness of a city, Bruges is for you the perfect place to be.

2. L'Arche Antwerp

They have 3 houses and 2 workshops in Mortsel and Boechout. All the houses are in the border of Antwerp with a lot of public transport to the city. You can easily bike to the city (8 km). Each house welcomes about 8 people with disabilities. We are welcoming one volunteer in each house: 'Madona' is a house full of joy and singing, in 'Roeach' are living more independent people with disabilities and loves to go out, in 'Windroos' people need more care (f.e. 2 of them are sitting in a wheelchair) and love to spend time in the sofa with coffee, tea and cookies.

We are looking for 3 volunteers, one for each house. The volunteers have a room in the house and can visit easily the other ESC-volunteers in the other houses.

3. L'Arche Ghent

They have one house in the citycenter of the student-city of Ghent. In the house are 8 people with disabilities. All of them are young and independent. One woman needs a wheelchair outside the house and is using a chariot in the house. In the house are also living 3 students who study in Ghent and taking care of the nightshifts.

We are looking for 1 volunteer who has a room in the house. Because of the presence of the students, the volunteer has close contact with people of his age.

How to apply?

- Just send an email to anja@ark.vlaanderen and we organise a zoom to talk about it. You can also call me on +32 495 48 96 27
- Or you contact your supporting organisation and they contact me
- We do the application process preference as fast as possible (best before July 2022).
- We prefer the volunteer to stay 9 to 12 months between 01/09/22 and 31/08/23.
- We will welcome 7 ESC-volunteers: on the moment we are looking for 3 other volunteers in Moerkerke-Brugge



Contact Anja (right)



Nikola and Rosita are ready to welcome you