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CDS 2008: Europäische Akademie Mecklenburg – Vorpommern

From May to August 2008 I was lucky enough to have an internship with a small non-profit organization in a small German city. The primary task of the Europäische Akademie is to host seminars concerned with German and European issues. The Akademie is a member of the community of European Academies and often collaborates with Polish organizations in its attempt to provide resources for further education. This was evident during my time at the Akademie, as a large chunk of my summer was spent helping to prepare for a German – Polish Youth Seminar.

The principle objective of the Akademie is to host interesting and informative seminars. Because my boss, Mr. Handy, was in Poland at the end of May, my first week in Waren (Müritzk) was spent with members of the German Armed Forces (Bundeswehr) participating in a seminar about the future of the EU and, specifically, how big the institution may be 20 years from now. The week was a typical one for the Akademie; though, it was particularly taxing for me to try to comprehend seven hours of academic German a day. The week was interesting and exhausting and provided a clear look at the final product of the work of the Akademie.

Once Mr. Handy arrived at the Akademie I started the work I would be doing all summer. I made photocopies, Power Point presentations, quizzes to be used at the seminars, filed, occasionally translated documents from English, and researched topics related to German or European politics. For a few days in early June I was instructed to research the four fundamental freedoms of the EU. I was then to use this information for a presentation to a small group of high school-

aged students. I was able to participate in a few other seminars for a short amount of time, and I was even able to participate in a study trip to Strasbourg, France. Though, I spent the greatest amount of time helping to prepare for the German – Polish Youth Seminar. Mr. Handy gave me responsibility over how much of the free time would be spent for the participants. I had to research Ice Breakers, games concerning Europe for them to play, and create quizzes about Germany, Poland, and Europe in general.



After the Youth Seminar, I was given several days to travel around Germany with my mom and brother, who had come to visit. I was able to see Berlin, Hamburg, and Munich before coming back to Waren (Müritz). Upon my return, the summer vacation season was peaking and, so, few seminars were taking place. However, the Akademie doubles as a hotel. Thus, we still had many guests. Mrs. Wilk, another of my colleagues, asked me on several occasions during these last few weeks to work the reception desk to check people in. It was daunting at first, but it vastly improved my German. All the while I continued to help file, organize,

and research for two upcoming seminars: one about environmentalism in Europe, the other a study trip to Israel. And as I was the first English-speaking person to work at the Akademie, I spent my last week translating several documents about the Akademie into English for guests who may speak English but no German.



Working at the Akademie provided me with invaluable work experience. As I have wanted to work for a political non-profit for a very long time, the Akademie was an excellent place for me to intern. I gained valuable office, research, and communication skills, and because the experience was truly international, I have a much stronger sense of cultural understanding that will be indispensable in the 21st Century. The unique work of the Akademie allowed me to interact with students from Australia, Denmark, Ethiopia, Germany, India, Pakistan, and Denmark, members of the German military, teachers from Siberia, and a Women's Group from Mecklenburg – Vorpommern, among others.

Waren (Müritz) is a small city with 21,000 people in Mecklenburg – Vorpommern. The Müritz is the largest lake that is entirely within Germany – the

Bodensee is shared with two other countries and, as any Warener will tell you, its area must be divided by three. I was provided free housing at the Akademie, which lies about two miles outside of the city. Luckily, Mrs. Wilk lent me her husband's bike for the summer so that I could ride into the city whenever I needed to. When I went into the city it was usually to get something to eat, walk around, or sit by the lake or in a café to read. My contact with the people in the area was relatively limited to my coworkers. Though, I did meet a woman who was born and grew up about 20 minutes from where I was born and raised. I was able to meet more people through her, like a few kids my age, who had studied in America. On the weekends one of my coworkers would often invite me along with her and her two kids to do various activities around the area. We went to a palace in Güstrow and even to Rügen for a day.

Had I not received a scholarship from CDS, my ability to participate in the program would have been severely limited. Despite having free housing, the Akademie did not always provide meals or a place for me to store food to make on my own. In these instances I had to go out to eat in the city, which was extremely expensive. Further, I had to pay to have my laundry done. This added up, and so I was very grateful to have received the CDS Scholarship. The Scholarship certainly helped to ensure that I wouldn't have to worry extensively about money while I was in Germany. Without it, my summer would have been much more stressful.

Thank you for providing me with this scholarship and the opportunity to work in Germany. The experience was invaluable, and I will certainly never forget it.