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„Getting involved is that simple“ – a social start-up from Berlin rethinks volunteering.

The Berliner platform vostel.de wants to make volunteering easy and fun for everyone. Especially newcomers should get the chance to find open-minded and diverse people to have the possibility to build up new networks through getting involved in local projects.

On vostel.de volunteers that want to get involved effectively in Berlin can easily find non profit organisations and initiatives that are looking for support for their projects. The bilingual platform offers a variety of projects - for every taste and time budget. The application is simple and not bureaucratic, so that there is more time that can be dedicated to actual help. Only founded last year, [vostel](http://vostel.de) already counts more than 1.600 registered volunteers, 50 partner organisations and 80 different promoted projects throughout Berlin.

With the platform vostel.de the founders want to reduce the barriers to be involved as a volunteer. "A third of the Berliners are already volunteering in their leisure time. Another 47 percent are interested to get involved - but just don't!" say the founders. The reasons for this are manifold. Some cannot commit long term due to their occupational or private life. In addition, most requests for volunteers are formulated only in German and thus exclude foreign target groups i.e. refugees, expatriates as well as visitors. This is the reason why many of the projects promoted on vostel.de do not require German knowledge. The founders highlight the advantages for foreign volunteers using the platform: "Next to that simple but awesome feeling of 'doing good', newcomers in Berlin also get the possibility to meet new people, build up own networks and also to find out about possible jobs".

So far, over 50 Berliner organisations and initiatives benefit from the [vostel](http://vostel.de) volunteers, including established NGOs like Berliner Stadtmission and Caritas as well as little and yet unknown initiatives that are reaching more awareness for their work through [vostel](http://vostel.de). There are more than 80 long-term and short-term projects listed on [vostel](http://vostel.de) ranging from tackling a kitchen shift in a refugee shelter, lending a hand to rescue food from being wasted to offer free rickshaw tours for handicapped elderly.

The team formed by the young entrepreneurs Stephanie Frost (28) and Hanna Lutz (29) started in September 2014 as a small initiative. Demand was high from the beginning, so they decided to transform it into a social business. Thus, they are entering some prolific partnerships with other Berlin based startups that want to take over their corporate social responsibility - just like Zalando or Booking.com. In this case, the aim is to get employees in touch with different and multilayered realities by giving them the possibility to use some of their working time for corporate volunteering activities. Later this year, the young company is looking to expand to other German cities to activate even more people to get involved in their community.

For more information, please visit www.vostel.de.

Pictures can be found on www.vostel.de/de/presse/

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