Innovation Academy Internship Program 2027

Background

The city of Freiburg is known as one of the most sustainable cities worldwide and as a pioneer in terms of renewable energy and environmental protection. Innovation Academy is a non-profit organization and official partner of the city of Freiburg for visitors from Germany and abroad with special interest in sustainability-related topics including urban planning, architecture, renewable energy, mobility, water and waste management, sustainable agriculture and forestry, and social sustainability. Furthermore, we are increasingly focusing on research, innovation, and new technologies that can contribute to the sustainable and future-proof development of cities and regions. Through our own regional projects, we also make concrete contributions to climate protection and sustainability.

As part of our activities, Innovation Academy has established close contacts with several American universities that regularly visit Freiburg and the region on study abroad field trips. Our collaboration with UNC Chapel Hill dates back to 2012. Since then, we have organized several study trips for groups from UNC. In addition, we twice had summer interns from UNC working with us in 2014 and 2016 but also interns from other universities. In the past years we developed an internship program to enable students to do an internship in the Freiburg region with focus on research, innovation and sustainability with its economic, ecological, and social aspects.

Following a successful launch in 2023 with three interns from Bryn Mawr College, we have been able to steadily expand the program. In 2024 and 2025 we also welcomed UNC students as interns in Freiburg and in 2026, 14 students from Bryn Mawr College, Wellesley College, Oberlin College, and Connecticut College took part in various work placements in Freiburg and the surrounding region.









We are convinced that such an internship offers students a valuable opportunity to gain international professional experience, discover new perspectives, and gain inspiration for their own future careers. At the same time, the host institutions benefit from the students' commitment, their diverse academic perspectives, and the wealth of ideas brought by young international students.

Services provided by Innovation Academy

Innovation Academy constantly explores new opportunities for internships, organizes the application process, supports with the approval process through the German Employment Agency and Visa applications, takes care of housing, insurances and advisement of the interns. After arrival in Freiburg, we offer a multi-day accompanying intercultural education and orientation program. During the stay we organize jobsite exchanges between the different intern placements, and we are available as emergency contact.

Establishing partnerships with organizations offering work placements: Innovation is constantly on the lookout for exciting internship opportunities in the fields of sustainability, research and innovation. We are always open to new suggestions regarding topics. We aim to build trusting, long-term partnerships with the host organisations.

Online Information Session: In collaboration with the participating colleges, we organise online information sessions to inform faculty and students about the program, the internship opportunities and the application process. The information sessions take place in the autumn to allow sufficient time for the entire process. As we place great importance on en-

suring the best possible preparation, we also offer individual online meetings where required.

The application process: As part of the information sessions, we provide advice on how to put together a successful application in Germany. December is the month to work on the applications. It is possible to apply for a maximum of two different placements, but it is important that they are relevant for the applicant's field of study. The participating colleges usually collect the applications and forward them to us in early January. If necessary, we carry out a preliminary selection and then forward the applications to the participating host institutions, which arrange online interviews with the applicants they are interested in. Innovation Academy maintains regular contact with the host organisations, thereby ensuring that the selection process runs smoothly. Usually, the process is completed by the end of February.

Support with approval by German employment agency and Visa application if required: Once an application has been successful, authorisation must be obtained from the German Federal Employment Agency. It is particularly important that there is a link between the work placement and the applicant's field of study or training objectives. Furthermore, students must have completed at least their second semester by the start of the work placement. Approval is usually applied for by the host organisation but requires the involvement of the college and the intern, as certain documents are required and forms need to be completed. Innovation Academy coordinates the process and ensures that approval can be granted quickly. Depending on the student's country of origin, it may be necessary to apply for a visa for the purpose of the internship. Innovation Academy also assists students with the application process, if required.

Organization of housing: Innovation Academy arranges housing for interns. Participants typically stay at the Black-F House in comfortable, furnished apartments in a central location, each with its own kitchenette. All the shops for daily necessities are in the immediate vicinity, and there's a tram stop right outside the front door. However, we have also arranged accommodation with host families in the past and plan to expand this option further. For internships located outside of Freiburg, we'll arrange alternative accommodation upon request. It is also possible to find temporary housing in student shared apartments, although this requires participants to take the initiative.

Health and liability insurance: We typically purchase a combined health and liability insurance policy for the participants. If the college offers suitable international health and liability insurance for the students, it is possible to opt out of the Innovation Academy's insurance. The program costs will be reduced accordingly.

Support Before Arrival: In the weeks leading up to arrival, we organize additional online meetings, offer support on important topics, and answer questions. This gives participants from the various colleges a chance to get to know one another in advance and coordinate a group trip from the international airport to Freiburg.

Arrival and orientation- and internship exchange days : The Innovation Academy picks up participants at the Freiburg train station and accompanies them to their accommodations. Our orientation program takes place over the following days. It focuses on getting to know one another, getting a first sense of Freiburg, and addressing practical questions:

- How does public transportation work, and how do I get a monthly pass?
- How can I use Freiburg's bike-sharing service, or where can I find an affordable bike for my stay?
- Where can I get a SIM card?

During the stay, we'll organize an exchange day where we'll visit some of the host institutions, and all participants will learn what the others are working on. We'll also offer additional optional activities.

In the future, we also plan to offer weekly German language classes.

On-site support: The Innovation Academy serves as a local emergency contact and provides support as needed, for example, to help arrange a necessary doctor's appointment.

Internship Opportunities

The program offers interdisciplinary internships at the intersection of sustainability, innovation, environmental protection, education, social inclusion, and cultural exchange. Placements range from research and consulting to environmental planning, sustainability education, community-based initiatives, sustainable food systems, and innovation projects.

Established partnerships

Oeko-Institut: Oeko-Institut e.V. is one of Europe's leading independent research and consultancy organisations working for a sustainable future. Since it was founded in 1977, the non-profit institute has been developing principles and strategies for implementing the vision of sustainable development at global, national and local level. Around 200 employees work at three locations in Freiburg, Darmstadt and Berlin. - **https://www.oeko.de/**

Innovation Academy e.V.: Innovation Academy sees itself as part of a global movement that aims to contribute to societal transformation through educating on sustainable development. The cornerstones of our educational work are sensitization, knowledge acquisition, activation, exchanging of experiences and the understanding that all of us can be influenced by positive, practical set examples. We organize specialized trips, excursions, and educational tours on the themes of innovation and sustainable development.
https://www.innovation-academy.de/en/

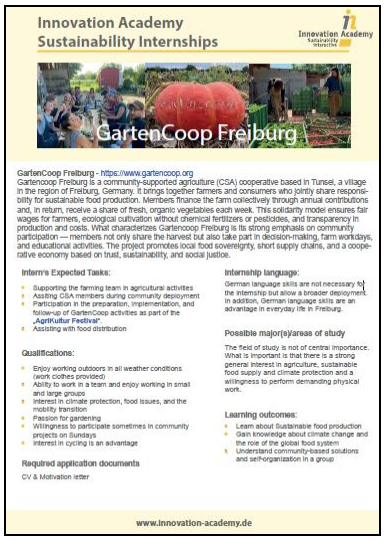
Biosphärengebiet Scharzwald (Good German language skills required): The Black Forest biosphere area is designated as a UNESCO biosphere reserve. Biosphere reserves are regions in which the coexistence of man and nature is promoted. Cultural landscapes that have grown over centuries have created valuable habitats for man and nature. The Black Forest biosphere area includes a variety of natural and cultural landscapes such as mixed mountain forests, moors, rivers and lakes, rocks and boulder heaps. They provide valuable habitats for the animal and plant world. The central task is to find a balance between the natural cycles and the use for regional value creation. **https://www.biosphaerengebiet-schwarzwald.de/**

FIT / livMatS: At the University of Freiburg, the Freiburg Institute for Interactive Materials and Bioinspired Technologies (FIT), the Freiburg Materials Research Facility (FMF) and the Cluster of Excellence Living, Adaptive and Energy-autonomous Materials (livMatS) are dedicated to the development of new materials and technologies for a more sustainable society. At the three research centers, we take a holistic view of sustainability as an interdisciplinary undertaking that encompasses chemistry, physics, biology and engineering. In addition, we also explore the societal impact of new technologies by conducting research on technology

acceptance and sustainability analysis as well as philosophical questions arising from disruptive processes. https://www.livmats.uni-freiburg.de/en

Garten Coop Freiburg: Gartencoop Freiburg is a community-supported agriculture (CSA) cooperative based in Tunsel, a village in the region of Freiburg, Germany. It brings together farmers and consumers who jointly share responsibility for sustainable food production. Members finance the farm collectively through annual contributions and, in return, receive a share of fresh, organic vegetables each week. This solidarity model ensures fair wages for farmers, ecological cultivation without chemical fertilizers or pesticides, and transparency in production and costs. What characterizes Gartencoop Freiburg is its strong emphasis on community participation — members not only share the harvest but also take part in decision-making, farm wordays, and educational activities. The project promotes local food sovereignty, short supply chains, and a cooperative economy based on trust, sustainability, and social justice. https://gartencoop.org/

Sample Job Descriptions for Internship Positions







New internship sites for 2027

Most institutions will once again offer internship positions for 2027. However, we are constantly working to establish new partnerships and are happy to take into account ideas and requests from students or our partner colleges. For 2027, we are currently in discussions with various potential new partners.

BadenCampus: BadenCampus is an innovation platform in the Southern Upper Rhine region that connects companies, startups, municipalities, and research institutions. Through innovation consulting, startup support, and co-creation initiatives, it fosters the development and implementation of sustainable solutions in areas such as digitalization, energy, industry, and smart regions. Interns would primarily support the arise Startup Accelerator and work in a dynamic, small team with flat hierarchies and personalized guidance. **https://en.arise-accelerator.de/**

Waldhaus Freiburg (Good German language skills required): The WaldHaus Freiburg is an environmental education center run by the nonprofit WaldHaus Foundation that provides information on forests, climate, and sustainability. Through forest education programs, exhibitions, workshops, and events, it brings ecological concepts to life, targeting schools, families, and the general public. **https://www.waldhaus-freiburg.de/**

IVU-Umwelt: IVU Umwelt GmbH is a small engineering firm specializing in environmental planning, environmental information systems, and the modeling of air pollution and noise pollution. The company develops reports, software, and digital solutions for environmentally oriented transportation and urban planning. **www.ivu-umwelt.de**

Weingut Andreas Dilger: Organic viticulture: Andreas Dilger Winery is an organic winery located in Freiburg. The winery specializes exclusively in PIWI grape varieties, which are fungus-resistant grape varieties that support environmentally friendly and sustainable viticulture. The winery handles the entire production process, from growing and harvesting the grapes to processing the grapes and producing the wine. As a small, independent winery, it combines organic farming, innovative grape varieties, wine production, sales and event management. An internship at the winery can therefore provide practical experience in different areas of organic viticulture and winery operations. **https://www.weingut-andreas-dilger.de/**

ASF Freiburg: ASF is Freiburg's municipal service company responsible for waste collection, street cleaning, and waste management. Its activities contribute to maintaining a clean urban environment and promoting the responsible use of resources. ASF operates various recycling centers and a secondhand store, the FUNDFABRIK. Interns will mainly support at these two locations. www.fundfabrik.de / www.abfallwirtschaft-freiburg.de/

Costs

Costs for 2027 are estimates. There are differences in some categories. Flight costs can vary significantly depending on the departure airport. When it comes to housing, there is a big

difference between staying with a host family and living in your own furnished apartment in the Black-F apartment building. However, the number of homestay accommodations is limited.

Position	**In €**	**In $** (exchange rate August 26)
Program fee 2027	2,750€	3,200$
Airfare	600-1,200€	700-1,400$
Transportation in Germany	300€	350$
Housing – Guest-family – 11 weeks	1,100 – 1,350€	1,300 – 1,600$
Housing furnished apartments – 11 weeks	3,000€ - 4,800€	3,500$ - 5,500$
Cost of Living	1,500 – 1,700€	1,750 - 2,000$
Total sum	**6,200 – 10,750€**	**7,300 – 12,300$**

Who can apply and how to apply?

Which degree subjects are relevant to these work placements?

- Environmental studies, Geography, Forestry
- Physics, Chemistry, Biology and other Natural Sciences
- Computer Science, Data management, Neuroscience
- Education Science, Social Work
- German

A combination with a double degree in German and Environmental Sciences or Education is particularly well-suited to certain work placements for which knowledge of the German language is required.

Interested students should have completed at least their fourth semester at the time of the internship and the profile should match the criteria stated in the job description. Applications should address the host institution and are typically collected by a designated office at the participating colleges and forwarded to the Innovation Academy. It is important that the application is tailored to the requirements of the advertised position and that the interest in the internship is clearly stated. We recommend carrying out own research on the internship institution and the specified areas of work and activities.

Innovation Academy reviews the applications and, if necessary, makes a pre-selection before forwarding the applications to the institutions. **Deadline for the application is January 06, 2027.**

Timeline for the 2027 application and preparation phase:

- 11-12/2026: IA provides information on internship opportunities and offers online information sessions for interested students.
- 12/2026: Students have time to apply until January 06, 2026. Applications will be sent to the internship department of the participating colleges and forwarded to Innovation Academy in early January.
- 01/2027: IA makes a pre-selection if necessary and forwards the applications to the hosting institutions.
- 01-03/2027: Host institutions reach out to interesting candidates and arrange interviews. Host institutions and applicants make a binding decision by late February / early March.
- 03-04/2027: After a successful application, advice for the next steps will be offered in additional online meetings. Students begin the visa application process if needed. A Visa is for example required depending on the Nationality or in case of a paid internship. A permission by the Federal German Employment Agency might also be required depending on the host organization. IA supports the process.
- 03-05/2027: Travel preparation, e.g. flight booking
- 05-08/2027: Internship period

Timeline for the stay in Freiburg:

- May 22nd: Arrival of the participants with pick-up at the train station and moving into the accommodation.
- May 23rd – 26th: Orientation days with Innovation Academy
- May 27th – 30th: Free time due to public holidays
- May 31st – August 06th: Internship period (usually 10 weeks). The period may vary depending on the internship and after prior consultation.
- August 08th: Expected departure