

HISTORY OF INTERMENNO TRAINEE PROGRAM

The idea of a Mennonite exchange program was conceived shortly after World War II by Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) relief workers to Europe as a way of building bridges of understanding and peace in the aftermath of a war.

In 1950 a group of 25 European Mennonite male farmers between the ages of 18-25 were the first participants in MCC's International Visitor Exchange Program (IVEP). By the second year women and participants other than farmers were included in the program. By 1956 the program was open to people beyond European boundaries. The first non-European participant was from Japan. Today IVEPers from 25 countries placed in vocational training assignments in the U.S. and Canada.

About ten years after this program began, the IVEP alumni returning to European countries decided that Mennonites in Europe would benefit by hosting and sponsoring North American young adults. IVEP alumni volunteered to serve on committees to find European sponsors/host families. They called their program the Intermenno Trainee Program and in 1960 the first North American young adults participated in this program.

The Intermenno Trainee Program continues to be administered by volunteer IVEP alumni. There are two committees -- The Dutch Intermenno Committee and the German/Swiss Intermenno Committee. European sponsors pay a fee to the committees. This fee pays the international & domestic travel costs, medical insurance, conference costs, monthly allowances and other administrative costs of the program. The Intermenno Trainee Program is a cross-cultural work-exchange program. Intermenno Trainees learn the local language, experience local culture and congregational life by living with a host family (who is often also the sponsor). Most trainees are involved in working on farms, greenhouses, retirement centers, churches or caring for children and doing housekeeping chores in a private home.

Though MCC's International Visitor Exchange Program (IVEP) and the European Mennonites' Intermenno Trainee Program are separate programs, they have always been considered a reciprocal exchange program. Many family members in North America and in Europe have received international visitors into their home and also been hosted/sponsored by a family.

Mennonites/Brethren in Christ churches around the world continue to find creative ways of bringing together young adults to experience life realities of different cultures, to provide vocational training, to develop an understanding of Christian service and to share with and receive from their brothers and sisters world-wide.

In 2007 MCC decided to discontinue the cooperation with Intermento Trainee Program.