

My EVS story

by Ula Andruszko from Poland

When I started my EVS service in the Foundation Krila nade, I was after finishing my 4th year of psychology, almost 2 years work experience in public radio in Wrocław (I've been making a program about world music), lot of experience in working on different culture festivals in Wrocław and being engaged in different kind of volunteership with people from different age groups and difficulties (children in kindergarten or primary school as well as elderly people in nursing home). In majority of my experience, art was included in the work with people. I volunteered at artistic workshops for children in primary schools and kindergartens and conducted bibliotherapy for inhabitants of nursery home. I also did my internship in psychiatric clinic in Wrocław, where I prepared radio drama with patients. At that time I felt ready to look for new experience, in different circumstances and learn about the topic which was always my interest - the psychological consequences of war and their treatment.



At the beginning of my EVS stay in October 2016, I was included in the project “Cognitive – Behavioral Treatment Program for Violent Behavior in School Children“. I had a pleasure to support CBT therapist Maja Alihodzić in conducting the workshops in four primary schools in Sarajevo, from November till beginning of May. I also had a chance to prepare and conduct my own workshops about human rights and gender stereotypes. I loved working with those young people, who were full of ideas and really devoted to their role of peer supporters. I realised how inspiring for me is work with adolescents. Because of great group energy and openness of Maja, I was inspired to come up on ideas of additional activities for children. During that work I realised how much I like creative activities as well as working with adolescents. I learned a lot about school system in BiH and how much school environment and atmosphere is important for children’s feeling of safety and comfort what has an impact on their school performance. I had a chance to observe how teachers’ and pedagogues’ attitude influences pupils’ entrepreneurship and willingness to participate actively in additional activities.

In the meantime, I was also supporting CBT therapist Belma Ziga with research on subjects needed for her current work, including school’s approach to transgender students and guidelines for HIV counselling. I learnt a lot about these subjects, having a chance to reflect a bit about these issues back in Poland.

I had a chance to learn a bit how to teach English giving few English classes to adults. When the project in schools finished, I started to do more intellectual and research work, than practical based on contact with people and group processes. Since I love to have variety in

work, I was really satisfied with having a chance to write a project proposal basing on Marija's Šarić suggestions. Making a research needed for that project, I learned about educational system in BiH and reasons of high unemployment rates. Later, together with interns from Denver University, I worked on a project proposal for LGBTI community about STI's prevention, under the guidance of Dejan Filipović. It was really interesting work, regarding knowledge I gained about situation of LGBTI population in BiH and programs of HIV/AIDS prevention as well as, above all, working atmosphere fulfilled with sharing ideas and developing the new project from the beginning. I had a unique opportunity to work with persons experienced in writing project proposals and learn from them.

What I value a lot about the knowledge and skills gained during this year, is a language skill I possessed, thanks to amazing teacher Jasenka Kapetanović, who introduced me to Bosnian and Croatian music, literature and poetry. I am also happy with the understanding about the situation in the region I gained. I participated a lot in cultural events, also outside BiH, learning and experiencing music scene of the region and differences among former Yugoslavia countries. I've watched lot of independent movies in Kino Meeting Point and since I had never been keen on cinematography, it was something new and valuable for me. And above all, during my 11 months stay I met a lot of interesting people from all around the world, with different passions, but shared social commitment and open mindedness, what confirmed my conviction, that everywhere in the world you can find a soulmate and a person with whom you find an understanding from the very first moment.