

European Volunteer Service at Wings of Hope/ Krila Nade

My first 4 month

Report by Maria Dumbsky

In October 2017 i came to Sarajevo to start my European Volunteer Service at the Foundation Wings of Hope/ Krila Nade.

Before I left I was quite nervous. I did not really know, what is waiting there for me or what I should or should not expect. As it is my first time in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as in the whole Balkans, I was neither familiar with the culture or cultural habits nor with the language, which can be difficult in the beginning. But all my doubts and concerns were blown away as soon as I went on the bus from Nuremberg to Sarajevo. The other travelers were mainly all from Bosnia. When they saw my uncertainty and learned that I am going to stay in Sarajevo for one year, they all took care of me a lot. Besides putting me into interesting conversations about Sarajevo and their country, they invited me for coffee and food as soon as the bus took a break. I got to experience the kindness and the hospitality of the people from the very beginning of my journey.

When I arrived in Sarajevo, I got a warm welcome from Emina (who was already a big help with all the paper work to do before the departure) and Alessandra, my first flatmate in Sarajevo. Also Sarajevo itself welcomed me with its full beauty.

My first day in Sarajevo was also my first working day. At the foundation I was surprised and happy that my lack of Bosnian language know-how did not influence the communication with the further stuff of Wings of Hope. English or German were sufficient.



Thanks to Emina I was not bored a minute since my I began working at the Foundation. She prepared a week timetable for me, which was a big help at the beginning.

First big part of it was, and is still, Bosnian lessons. From the start on I have Bosnian classes three times a week. Though Bosnian is still very difficult for me, it is a lot of fun and I see myself making progress and understanding more and more in conversations.



During the Bosnian Class with Dejan. Mohamed and me are trying to figure out the superlatives of adjectives.

Furthermore I was and still am supporting German lessons. On Fridays the foundation offers German class for adults. Both, beginners and advanced learners attend it. While Albisa, the German teacher, works with the beginners I am doing mainly speaking practices with the advanced ones. Also, instead of Mondays, I am working on Saturdays. On this day the organization offers again German lessons, as well as math, for children and teenagers. I am again supporting Albisa with the German lesson. Mainly the pupils come to practice for an exam at school or for support with the homework. Over the time I got some students myself who come during the week for individual German lesson. Currently I have one student at level A1. With him I work on the coursebook *Menschen*. The two other students have a advanced level. I mostly discuss articles with them. Thereby I take care to choose the topics according to their interest.

Besides that, from the beginning on I was involved in the BUILDPEACE Project of the organization. Aim of the project is to create online tools for learners and educators about peace building. Special about this project is the combination of formal and non-formal approaches and thus the collaboration of Universities and NGOs from several countries. As the task of Wings of Hope is to create a toolkit, I did research about the basic knowledge like: How do toolkits look like? What is a possible content for this topic? What are needed definitions? What is the background of peace building? Which universities offer studies concerning peace building? Etc.

In the beginning of February I was able to join the BUILDPEACE meeting in Belgrade for four days. As it was the first meeting I attended, I learned not only about the content of the project but also about methods used in the meeting by facilitators or trainers. Besides that I got to know beautiful Belgrade in where I felt comfortable from the first moment.

The organization also implements workshops in schools. From October until January I was supporting them. This was one of my favorite tasks to do.

One of the workshops was with children from second and third grade. Topic of this workshop was the positive handling of emotions and the reflection and training of social skills and interactions. Though the workshop was all in Bosnian it was very interesting for me as I could observe the used methods and

exercises. Also my colleague Belma, who was in charge for this workshop, always brought up the patience to translate the important parts for me.

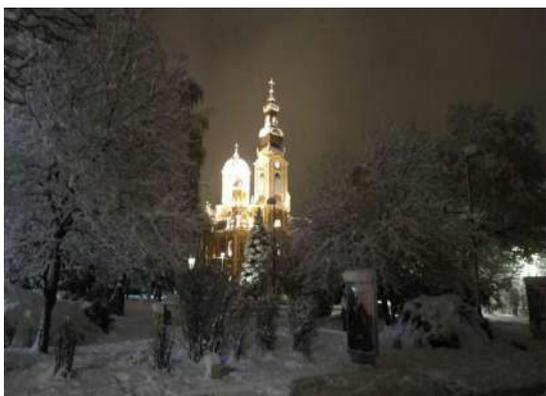
The participants of the second workshop were students from 5th till 9th grade. Surprisingly the communication was not a problem at all as they were all already fluent in English. The workshop broached the issue of bullying as a daily happening in schools. The participants formed the peer-support and were trained in methods and skills how to react on bullying and how to support victims. As adults are mostly not informed by the victims about what is happening, the chance that they tell peers is much higher. Thus it is important to equip teenagers themselves with knowledge and skills.



In all I can say that my work is quite varied. I appreciate that it covers both, office work and interpersonal tasks like workshops or lessons. Thus I am able to get an insight and practice in different things.

Besides work, Sarajevo really offers a lot of things to do. There are many museums and a lot of nice concerts. Also the movie scene is quite popular here and at the beginning I had the impression that there is a movie festival every weekend, for example the Human Rights Film Festival or the Week of Film of Višegrad Group. At the festivals as well as in some regular cinemas in Sarajevo they mostly screen Indie and Alternative Movies. Thus you are able to see movies from very different countries and topics. That is really special and pressures for me.

The city itself as well as the nature is stunning and just having a walk is so incredible.



Even, or maybe especially in winter times, when snow covers everything.

In the city you can see different periods of time just through architecture. When you go to the city center you first pass the Soviet Union. Then suddenly you are in the Austro-Hungarian Empire and finally, at the core of the city, in the Ottoman Empire. These walks kind of make you feel like a time traveler.

In the evening you can go out for having delicious food (even as vegetarian) and the bars you can go afterwards are really nice and comfortable. Also, and for me most important, there is really beautiful cafes where you can sit for few hours and just read or relax. In case you get bored, there is several cities around Sarajevo which you can visit on a day trip. As I am not bored in here yet, I have just been to Travnik so far, which was really nice. But further travels and trips will definitely be planned soon.

So far I can just tell positives things about my EVS in Sarajevo. In the Office as well as in the city I feel very comfortable. But to make this possible , it costed a lot of efforts, calls and patience. As Bosnia and Herzegowina has no National Agency itself, I needed to find a sending organization which was willing to apply for the project.



After a dozen of calls I was finally lucky. Ulrico Ackermann from the organization Freiwilligen Zentrum Augsburg offered to it. I know it means a lot of extra work and thus I am even more thankful for his engagement.



For me, It was definitely worth coming to Wings of Hope and I am looking forward for eight more month!