



POLITISTIKO ERGASTIRI AYION OMOLOYITON



**NEWSLETTER – NOVEMBER
2020**





MY ESC PROJECT – Aila

Being back in my hometown and reflecting about the past seven months that I spent in Cyprus makes me smile but also nostalgic. I remember the first day, my arrival in Cyprus, a new and strange country. When I got out of the airport everything was green, the grass and the trees - completely different than what I expected. I remember how I first met all the other volunteers; how difficult it was to remember their names in the beginning and how we had been all a bit shy and insecure.

The arrival training at **Politistiko Ergastiri Ayion Omologiton** had helped us a lot to overcome our shyness and to get to know each other a bit more. I also remember my feelings when I came to Cyprus; my excitement and curiosity about my new home and how I was eager to discover the new place I was living in. In our second week, the school project started and we met the teachers and the pupils we were working with. The work there was to be honest a bit difficult because of the different language that was spoken and because of the sometimes-unclear tasks and instructions of the school principal.

Besides that, I believe I managed to build a connection with some of the children that were able to speak in English with me. It was amazing to see how trustful and loving they are.

During the free time we started to discover some places and go out in the evenings. The friendship between us, the volunteers, got stronger and I also started to connect with some local people. I got to know more about the history of the country and about their culture. Everything started to get to a routine but suddenly all this got interrupted by the lockdown. It was such a strange and uncertain time where we did not know what was going to happen next. This period was challenging, not only personally but also for the relation between the people that I was living with. I was lucky that I was able to spend the lockdown in a small town called Dali. It allowed my housemate and me to still go out in nature and to enjoy the spring weather. Our time passed with cooking, working out and reading. We tried to spend our time creatively but after weeks of staying home our wish to go to the beach or to meet people again got stronger and stronger.

After the lockdown we were so happy to go on our first trip again and to have our first swim in the sea. You could feel the difference of how people started to meet again and how the anxiety got less. Also, the school started again but of course with a lot of restrictions, which made the work even harder for us. Nothing was like before and the people still had to be very careful.

Due to the pandemic we were lucky to be able to extend our ESC project. After the school finished we moved to Paphos and got involved in a different project. We were working in the fields and at a family restaurant. The work was physically more exhausting but also, a very nice experience.

POLITISTIKO ERGASTIRI AYION OMOLOGITON

Address:

Ierodiakonou Mansion 1,
1080 Lefkosia, Cyprus.

Phone: +357 22256782

Fax: +357 222567823

Website: <http://politistiko-ergastiri.org/index.php/en/home-3/>

Email: info@politistikoergastiri.org



Slowly the end of my ESC project got closer and we had to say goodbye to the first volunteers that left, back to their home countries. It was hard to see them leaving one by one and especially the thought of my last day got more and more intense. I was torn about staying and leaving.

All these amazing, unforgettable and also some tough experiences made it really hard for me to leave Cyprus, especially saying goodbye to my friends and the person I fell in love with, it has been one of the most difficult things I had to go through. However, I am thankful for this opportunity I had with ESC. It has taught me to appreciate every single moment even if it seems so insignificant. "All the good things come to an end but every end brings also a new beginning..."

– Aila Cavkic (Austria), Unity - iOS: Education Volunteers

MY ESC PROJECT IN CYPRUS – Sara

When they first told me about the European Solidarity Corps I had no idea what was waiting for me! I don't think it is possible with a single article to describe what I felt or went through because it would be reductive, however I will try to do my best.

What exactly did I do?

My project, which started in February, was to support schools during educational and recreational activities. I was lucky enough to find a teaching staff and a principal who proved to be very competent from a professional point of view and a valuable emotional support; the school was very well organized and open to multiculturalism. Actually, despite the fact that there was a large percentage of children from different countries who often had difficulties speaking the official language, the school was always available to support and help with any critical issues that emerged, both from a didactic point of view and related to particular family situations. My roommate and I found ourselves in an open and welcoming environment that gave space to our passions and provided a valuable opportunity for personal growth.

Later, my project, due to the Covid-19 outbreak and my consequent return to Italy, was developed mainly at home and was focused on online work and newsletter creations for the next three months. It was certainly a different period from my expectations... But this allowed me to extend my project until July and return to Cyprus to spend another month and a half and complete my project.

Since my return to Nicosia, we had the opportunity to work for a family place in the area around Paphos, in their family business, and then try a completely different kind of volunteering, focused on contact with nature and land. For us it was also a way to spend more time together and to be immersed in the typical and great local Cypriot hospitality.

All this was made possible thanks to the extreme hospitality and availability of my host organization in which I found security and stability. Although I was not present in Cyprus for the entire duration of the project, the association always made me participate in all activities and kept in constant contact with me, so that I could continue my work with them and have moral support.

This experience has given me a precious opportunity to discover my strengths and weaknesses, allowing me to work on them and make me safer both for my daily life and in the future. One of the most intriguing opportunities that I was given in this experience and that enriched me the most, was meeting all the volunteers who, like me, participated in the project! My group was made up of young people with different cultural backgrounds, but who were lucky enough to bond a lot with each other. We created a small momentary family, a real support and sharing group for all our adventures and misadventures. All of them have been for me a fundamental part of the project and also, the most difficult one to say goodbye to.

Cyprus for me has been a place of rediscovery of myself, I think I left a small part of my heart in it, but despite this I will never be able to remember this experience reluctantly, because looking back I am sure there will only be a smile for the unforgettable memories of all the beautiful moments I spent and the beautiful people I met.





- Sara Costaglioli (Italy), Unity - iOS: Education Volunteers

MY VOLUNTEERING EXPERIENCE

AT POLITISTIKO ERGASTIRI AYION OMOLOYITON, CYPRUS 2020 – Amalia

It's impressive how time flies, especially if you enjoy what you are doing and make the most out of your experience every single day. Here we are, after the end of my volunteering project for Politistiko Ergastiri Ayion Omoloyiton as part of the European Solidarity Corps Programme on the beautiful, yet most hospitable island, of Cyprus.

My volunteering journey started back in February 2020, when I moved from my hometown, Athens, to Dali, a village on the suburbs of Nicosia in order to work at the A' Primary School as an Education Volunteer. The duration of the project was 5 months and we were involved in many tasks such as the creation of activities and educational games in the school, assisting the teachers during lessons, preparing the materials, support the pupils in their learning process as I speak Greek, be part at theatre plays, fairs etc.

Me and my flatmate, were lucky enough to be assigned to that incredible school with the best headmistress, teachers and work environment I could ever ask for. They were always there to help us, to guide us, to support us, to respect us and appreciate everything we were doing for the school.

Every Thursday, we were assisting "Idaliades", a group of elderly local women who make bags, laces, handcrafts, cookies and charity bazaars to support the local community. Very soon after my arrival, the Covid-19 outbreak happened in Cyprus and we were in lock down for 2 months.

During this period, I was mostly working on my laptop, making Kahoot! games for the pupils and writing newsletters for Politistiko Ergastiri. Because of Covid-19 I had the great opportunity to extent my project for 3 more months. I participated in 2 more projects with environmental topic, assisting local farmers in their fields. These experiences were so enriching for me and filled up my desire to be close to nature, to harvest loads of different crops as well as tropical ones that grow in Cyprus and meet local people living in rural areas, learn about their living style and habits. What I liked a lot is the constant learning process of the projects which was accompanied with training, reflection meetings and evaluations on every stage.

A presentation was following each project to share what we have offered and spread the word for ESC projects. This journey wouldn't be the same without the support and encouragement of my coordinators Alexandros Ioannou and Eleonora Chrysanthi. They are both very admirable fellows with much love for what they do, hence great role models for all of us.

I feel so grateful to have given the change to collaborate with these kind and authentic people, to be part of their community and feel their positive vibe.

Needless to say that this experience will always hold a special place in my heart. I would like to thank each and every person that contributed to the implementation of this project and made it an unforgettable experience which I will be always reminiscing of.

My wish is that more and more young people will get involved with such projects and they will be rewarded with all the benefits out of it. Try it out cause this world is in urgent need of solidarity and empathy! :)
Love,



- Amalia Michail (Greece), Unity - iOS: Education Volunteers

MY FINAL ARTICLE ABOUT CYPRUS – Lilliana

Here we are... It's been a while since I said goodbye to Cyprus and I'm entering a new stage of my life. Finding a way to describe how this experience has been for me won't be an easy task but I will do my best.

- Was it how I thought it would be? Not at all.
- Did it go as I pictured it in my head? Not exactly...
- Did I meet incredible people? Yes, indeed!
- Was it an unforgettable experience? *Nai vai vai vai!* A thousand times yes!

To begin with I would say I wasn't expecting these 6 months to be so significant in my personal development. But looking back, I think I can say taking a gap year and going to Cyprus was the best decision I could have made after graduating high school. Leaving my city and old habits behind has allowed me to take a step back and look at life from a different perspective. And at this point in time, I somehow feel ready to start a new chapter and I am much more motivated to go to university.

The "Education Volunteers" project has been a real rollercoaster for all of us as we encountered some obstacles and difficulties along the way. But knowing I wasn't alone made getting through these much easier. I find there is something very special in learning to live, share, and work with other people from so many different backgrounds. Being an educational volunteer also showed me just how important it is to provide children with quality education and support so that they get equal opportunities to the greatest extent possible.

Furthermore, I would like to add a small note on my last weeks spent in the rural village of Γαλιά. It was in my opinion, the best way possible to end this adventure. I felt very connected to my surroundings and the family we all created at Val's Place. I also got the chance to discover their lifestyle which is so simple and vibrant at the same time. To my great surprise, I realized there are so many paths left for me to explore in terms of vocation and lifestyle.

Our training at the end of the project also helped me to reflect on what it is I really want for my future, or at least have a better idea of where I'm headed in life.

Last but not least... a big ευχαριστώ πολύ to everyone who played a part in this short but defining period of my life. Not to forget the ESC program for giving me, and so many others, the opportunity to promote intercultural exchange as well as solidarity in all its aspects. But foremost for believing in this project, in me, in us, and in what we can create hand in hand.

- Lilliana Paez Civico, (Belgium), Unity – iOS: Education Volunteers

MY VOLUNTEERING IN CYPRUS – MéliSSa

My volunteering experience ended in August and I think it was one of the saddest days I lived so far. I had such an amazing time in Cyprus. I really enjoyed working for the Primary School of Pefkios Giorgiades in Nicosia, a really nice school with really nice teachers, students and other people working there. Politistiko Ergastiri Agion Omologiton also helped us a lot. We could not expect better from an organisation. They were always there for their volunteers, helpful, understanding and trustworthy.

I also feel so lucky for the other volunteers I lived with. We were all friends and we had such funny times all together. We did our project during a special time, Covid-19 time, which didn't stop us from having a good time and travelling around Cyprus.

This experience taught me a lot, I will never forget it.

MéliSSa Chablain (France), Unity – iOS: Education Volunteers

MY FINAL ARTICLE OF CYPRUS – Isabel

Everytime I think back, it makes me very happy and sad at the same time. It's sad that it's over because I miss everyone and this time it really ended. The first time I went home (due to the lockdown enforced in Cyprus to face the pandemic), the chance of me going back to Cyprus was kinda big, but that's not the case anymore. The happy part about it is all the amazing memories I made with everyone, the places I visited, and the things I learned during the project, which I can't be more thankful for.

It truly is one of the best decisions I made, because I think this will help me in the future. For example, how to "deal" with other cultures, which is so important for Europe but also just for me.

What I do regret is, that I went home during the lockdown, but I was in a lot of pain because of the car accident I had a month earlier. If I had stayed it would have been my opportunity to get to know myself and my flat mates. Also, after the lockdown, they traveled around Cyprus, and I didn't get the chance to do that, but the places I visited were amazing and I hope to see more of Cyprus one day - maybe with a few people I met during the project.

It's weird because I thought I would be able to meet with them after our volunteering activity in Cyprus. Sadly, that's not the case because of COVID-19.

I miss everyone and I hope I'll meet you all one day again. I want to thank everyone for making this an amazing project.

Love,

Isabel van den Berg (The Netherlands) – Unity – iOS: Education Volunteers

