



POLITISTIKO ERGASTIRI AYION OMOLOGITON



**NEWSLETTER -
WWV PROJECTS
PART 1**

“My experience in Cyprus as volunteer”

I recently took part in the WWV project organized by Politistiko Ergastiri Ayion Omologiton in the village Lysos, of Cyprus where I stayed for four weeks. We were 12 volunteers from different countries around Europe and our tasks were everything from painting stables and fences to picking carobs and grapes. I’m an 18-year-old girl from Sweden and I was the youngest and only Swedish participant from this project. Since I had never done a project like this or not even volunteered in my whole (18 year “long”) life before, I didn’t really know what to expect. Of course, I expected to work and help, get to know new people and cultures and to see new places but it was so much more than that. Also, it was my first time traveling this far alone and being away for such a long time from home.



Since I was one of the last ones to arrive, I was welcomed by all the participants and the organization and I felt like I would really get on well with the group. In the start it was a little awkward and no one really knew how to act but after the introduction/training and some energizers the group started to warm up more and more. This was necessary because the work we were supposed to do was a lot about teamwork and reliability. During the training we also got to know more about the history of the village and about carobs, which I really appreciated because it gave the work we did a deeper meaning and foundation than just work to work.

During our first week of work, we got to know the villagers better, developed our carob picking skills and got to know each other even more. We were split into smaller teams and every team worked for different farmers every day but with similar tasks. During the second week, our mission

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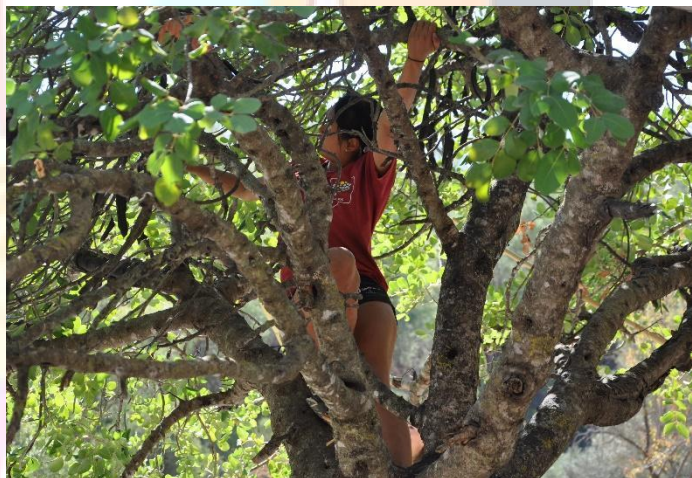
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was to paint a stable but after the first day I got an allergic reaction (we suspect the horses) and had to go back to the house. In the beginning of the next week, we picked grapes, but it wasn't according to the plan. We were supposed to pick carobs for Maro, who is the owner of the accommodation. (I just have to tell you that she's an amazing person who took so good care of us and made us feel at home.) Unfortunately, the reason why we didn't work for her was because her husband got sick and passed away during our stay there. We still really wanted to help her, so the rest of the week it was carobs again but in her fields. If you want me to explain how to pick carobs, you basically hit the carobs that grow in a tree, with a stick to make them fall on a sheet you've laid out underneath and collect them into bags. Or you do it the funny way, climb the tree, which is less tiring for your arms (trust me, I'm a professional carob picker AND tree climber now).



However, I enjoyed our tasks but maybe it was very much carob picking. At the same time, I didn't know what to expect, maybe people do the same things every day for a year in longer projects, but I just like variation. Maybe add some halloumi making? Two weeks of picking carobs isn't *that* much anyways when our days were so full of different people and incidents, let's just say we got new experiences every day. Another thing that I also would like to change is to get closer with the farmers, or to be more with them (if they want to) during our time off. Again, maybe that's not really a thing to change since it's our own choice what to do during our spare time.

I would still like to feel a closer connection to the farmers though, maybe it would be good to have an interpreter since we didn't speak the same language. Sometimes it's more effective to be able to talk instead of using sign language and charades, but it was also fun.

I've learnt tons of things about myself, the village and just about life. I've met so many new, kind people (especially the villagers, always willing to help) and the views from the mountains were amazing. I'm kind of shy as a person and to meet complete strangers from completely different countries, with completely different cultures and languages and to live with them.

From this month I think I've learned to be a little bit more open and to step out of my comfort zone. I'm actually proud of myself. I've learnt to compromise, adapt, plan and to share (and so much more). I don't mean to share just as in material things, I also talk about sharing experiences, culture and stories. I've also brought home a lot from this, like memories and pictures and different impressions and experiences (not to speak of new friendships). Things that will shape me a little bit and make me see life from a different point of view, from a bigger perspective. I'm so happy that I got and chose to take this opportunity because it's one of the best things that I've done in my life. And if I had to choose I would take it 100 times over and over, at least.



Olivia Bjursten (Sweden) - Unity iOS: World Wide Village in Lysos 2021



“My ESC in Cyprus”

I recently took part in a European Solidarity Corps project in Cyprus, with the organisation, Politistiko Ergastiri Ayion Omologiton. The experience was really enjoyable: the accommodation was better than I expected, the house was big and we had a nice view of the sea!

I got along nicely with the volunteers, we were able to travel to different cities and villages every week-end. The locals made us feel safe and welcome and offered their help for transportation.

I really recommend taking part in this project, it was an amazing experience!

Romane Puyjalinet (France) - Unity iOS: World Wide Village in Lysos 2021

“An incredible experience full of surprises”

When I applied to volunteer in Lysos, I had no idea what to expect. It was my first time doing a European Solidarity Corps project and I would recommend it to anyone. Beyond the work in the fields, which certainly showed us what real manual work was, it was above all the encounter with the local population and with a country. I knew almost nothing about Cyprus and this project really made us see the political tensions present and the very particular history of this country. What I will remember the most are the discussions I had with old people but also with young people of my age living in this country. They are really nice people and it was a pleasure to spend time with them.

I also really enjoyed collecting carobs, as this is also a kind of tradition for me in this country and I am proud to have experienced this. This country has an incredible richness in the fields and I think it is fantastic that in only a 9km radius between the sea and the village of Lysos where we were, we could find absolutely all varieties of fruits and vegetables.

This project was also about meeting other volunteers, living and working with them. I had the chance to meet all these fabulous people without whom this project would not have been the same. I really enjoyed the mix of cultures and learning more about our European culture. I am deeply grateful to the Politistiko Ergastiri organisation for making this project happen and to the supervisors for their help and support.

Morgane Martin (France) - Unity iOS: World Wide Village 2021

“When I went to Cyprus, I knew some...”

When I went to Cyprus, I knew some things about the country, I already found it fascinating. Military British territories, divided country. I knew I would have visited at least Nicosia, but I didn't know that I would have traveled a lot around and that would have been so challenging and beautiful.

Why did I come here? Who knows? The first thing that I felt was the hot weather.

Cyprus is also considered Middle East (I'm a geographer, trust me) but I imagined it drier. I've never sweated so much. Fortunately, I lived for one month in a small village (Lysos), altitude around 500 mt. The night was perfect, so perfect that one night after all the strong drinks that you can imagine (rum, vodka and of course ouzo) I slept on the rooftop. Okay, it was the alcohol, I didn't really want to do it.

What did I do in Lysos? I picked up a fruit (that I can also find in Italy) carob. A compressed black fruit that you can use for making syrup, bread, chocolate. Not an easy taste, kind of bitter. After waking up before 6/7 for 2 weeks, falling from a tree, scratches, smelling nets, hot weather, working with farmers that shout "Ela" and they don't speak english, and they throw you rocks and food well it's up to you, you love, or you hate carobs (some made a 2-week tattoo, I wasn't that drunk to do it in Ayia Napa). Only carobs? Of course not, also painting the fences of the church, picking grapes one day and painting the ranch of a crazy British woman that

wanted to take us back home with a jeep where we were 11. Yes, 11. Why not...


The month was full. On the weekends I visited the country. What to remember? The first weekend of course is the Blue Lagoon, diving from a boat, Paphos UNESCO heritage, the second is Ayia Napa, Cape Greco (the East part of Europe if we don't consider overseas territories) and the clubs (Well I don't remember much), third weekend Troodos, beautiful mountains, camping, hiking. The fourth weekend was my favourite. We visited Nicosia/Lefkosia/Lefkoşa. I fell in love with the city. It's so messed up and disorganized. We saw the wall (not really a wall) and visited Kyrenia/Girne and Famagusta/Ammochostos/Gazimağusa.

I will remember Maras/Varosha. Abandoned Greek cypriot neighborhood after the Turkish occupation. An incredible ghost city.

What else? Food, great food. Halloumi (a non-melting cheese) that is everywhere, souvlaki, meze, every tasteful fruit, yogurt, hummus and I don't forget an amazing breakfast in Kyrenia with menemen and simit.

Also, how to forget Efes, sorry Keo and Leon.

Who to thank? Politistiko, for sure. Thank you, Lexie, for being with us, Maria, Alexis, Maro, Kokos and all the incredible farmers and villagers of Lysos and around. Mention Christakis. Hard worker, few words, incredible tree climber and I think he never eats, just drinking ouzo and smoking cigarettes (My man).



The group was great, I'm not enjoying all the time being in the group. I like my time alone but if you are 12 well, you have to join sometimes. What I appreciated is that we agreed on all the trips on the weekends. At least one/two things per each. Nil for your guitar and your music, Olivia for your beautiful voice and helping mode, Tejka for your smartness and intelligence, Jakob for your interesting behavior and your love for your country, Silvia for your laugh and for your energy, Morgane for your availability and your smile, Hannah for your sensibility and for your surprised faces, Romane for your love for funny things and for sense of adventure, Paulina for your organization and for your love for alcohol, Dominik because you are my bedmate and for all the funny discussions, Ohan for all the drinks and for every discussion we had.

Efcharisto, teşekkürler, thank you, grazie.

Samuele Dell'Anna (Italy) - Unity iOS: World Wide Village in Lysos 2021

"Cherry Jam of a Lifetime"

When I was getting close to my graduation I was starting to feel stuck in my hometown and culture and thereby decided to do something about it. The following month I applied for numerous projects around Europe and I must say, I could not have been happier with the one that accepted me.

The following weeks I prepared for the cultural differences with my sending organization, prepared for the project and the travel with Politistiko Ergastiri, while simultaneously preparing for my graduation. The weeks felt long and stressful while also being some of the most exciting and nerve wracking weeks of my life.

As I got home from the graduation party, I finished packing and went to sleep for a couple of hours. At 4 AM I woke up, got to the airport then took the flight to Larnaca. I remember soaring over the cypriot landscape, feeling surprised by the yellow, desertlike environment which stretched over the tall mountains as it turned greener, a beautiful landscape which aroused my curiosity as my urge to discover intensified.

When I landed in Larnaca, I quickly recovered my luggage and walked to the bus shuttle to Nicosia. The bus stopped outside of the city with no additional bus stop in sight. As I asked a stranger for a bus to the centre, he kindly walked with me and showed me the way, while introducing me to the soon to be beloved cypriot culture. I took a bus to the centre of Nicosia, then took another one to the mountain village Kakopetria where a project coordinator was gonna pick me up because the buses had stopped going. I remember waiting for my coordinator while nervousness was bubbling up. I loved Kakopetria, beautiful architecture with beautiful views over the hillside and friendly population, nevertheless, I couldn't shake the thought that the others had already started to get to know each other and that it was gonna be hard to get into the group. My mind was going on and on about the difficulty of living together with 12 other young adults as an outsider.

When my coordinator picked me up the feelings disappeared, all of a sudden I felt safe and calm as we talked about everything regarding the project during the car ride. He was kind, professional and caring about the project, consequently, most of my worries vanished.

As we made it to the school in Pedoulas the nervousness bubbled up again, I left my things in my room and then went into the kitchen to get something to eat as I hadn't eaten in many hours. That first night seems distant and strange as I look back to it. I was so exhausted that the conversations I had went into one ear then out through the other. The next day was an introduction day, we were walking through Pedoulas and getting to know each other, trying to build some group spirit for the upcoming month. As I remember it, the first night I felt estranged and distant, the first day I felt like I was getting familiar with the others and the third and fourth one, a Saturday and Sunday in Limassol, I was spending with some of my best friends.

As the second week started it was finally time to work. On Monday morning we were all picked up at 7 AM by different farmers or municipality workers. An old man in a car with his granddaughter and an employee picked me and another volunteer up. They were so friendly and hospitable it was unlike anything I had ever seen before. We were picking cherries in one of his beautiful cherry gardens on the hillside of a mountain while we were all talking and getting to know each other. After half an hour the old man came up to me holding a big, ripe cherry between his fingers and telling me "Leon, you see this, this one is perfect, the perfect ones you don't want to save for the customers, the perfect ones you eat.". He was the most hard working, yet relaxed and generous farmer I have ever met. Later that day his family gave us an amazing lunch with dessert and coffee.

This is how the workdays went for me, 5 days a week we worked with amazing and generous farmers (with a few exceptions of cleaning roads for the municipality of Pedoulas or a neighbouring village). Our 2 days off we travelled around Cyprus and got to see other parts of the culture as we got to know more people and friends.

The culture of Cyprus as I know it, is the most hospitable and welcoming culture I have ever gotten to know. It wasn't uncommon to randomly be invited to someone's house for a coffee as we were cleaning a road or asking for directions and every time I was in someone's home I started feeling bad for how well they were treating me, knowing I would probably never get to return the favor.

Last week was probably the best and worst one at the same time. The concerning feeling of an imminent goodbye weighed on my shoulders more than my luggage ever could as I was spending a fantastic week in Cyprus, surrounded by people which I felt unbelievably close to. I couldn't believe I was gonna say goodbye to Cyprus and I couldn't believe I was gonna say goodbye to these people. Looking back at it, however, I feel convinced that it was a casual "see you later".

Leon Wallberg (Sweden) - Unity iOS: World Wide Village in Pedoulas 2021