



POLITISTIKO ERGASTIRI AYION OMOLOGITON



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**EUROPEAN
SOLIDARITY
CORPS**

“Volunteering in Cyprus – My experience working in a Primary School”

From February until July 2021, I participated in the project Unity-iOS for Politistiko Ergastiri Ayion Omoloyiton over the platform European Solidarity Corps. As a volunteer, I would be working in a primary school located in Nicosia, the capital of Cyprus.

My school, Pefkios Georgiades Elementary School, was fairly big and very well equipped. I worked together with another volunteer, and our job was to keep the children entertained during break time, coming up with different activities and games. I personally enjoyed working in art class with the kids, where I could be more helpful and have fun with them. With the older classes, I could incorporate some English classes with the art activities, and get the kids to practise it with me. We also did some activities like planting and environmental awareness presentations with the kids, which was very fun and engaging for them. Sharing my country and traditions in Geography classes was also a great experience for me, since I could show them something more personal about me and how I grew up, and they really enjoyed learning more about Portugal.

All in all, I had a great time at the school, especially because of the children I met there.

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It was my first time working in the field of Education, and it was better than I imagined it to be. The bonds you get to form with the kids and the impact you cause on them and they on you is something I will cherish forever. I learned a lot about education in Cyprus, and it was a great experience to meet such great teachers who want to do their best to improve the Education System in their country.

My experience in Cyprus was great – sharing it with the other volunteers, meeting new people and getting to know different points of view, while getting to share mine as well, was very

interesting and fulfilling. I got to live something new every day, learn so much about the complicated history of this beautiful island, and I left with the sense that I enjoyed as much as I could everything that came my way.

Beatriz Carvalho (Portugal) - Unity iOS: Education Volunteers 2021

My ESC experience – an overview

My name is Denis and my project took place in a primary school in Cyprus. There I had the chance to integrate some of my ideas into the everyday life of the school. I also got the opportunity to join some typical school events, like the graduation of the pupils. And actually, according to the daily life of the school, there are more similarities to my home country than I thought! Next to my project I also could help out in my hosting organisation Politistiko Ergastiri Ayion Omoloyiton.

For example, I already had some knowledge of video editing. Therefore I assisted in producing an interview movie of the organisation. Generally, the volunteers had the opportunity to create a “personal project”. Consequently, I took this chance and made a small exhibition about the history of Nicosia, the capital of Cyprus. Together with another volunteer, I went to do some interviews to fill our exhibition with interesting content. During the interviews we also made some pictures, to promote it also more visually. The opportunity to go abroad gave me a new chance to see things from another point of view. Especially my country destination Cyprus was a big enrichment for me.

The mixture of a nice culture, an interesting history and the hospitable people made me really welcomed in this beautiful country.

Denis Hoffmann (Germany) - Unity iOS: Education Volunteers 2021

“My ESC in Cyprus”

I was a volunteer in the ESC program for five months. During this time, I worked in a primary school in Nicosia, Cyprus. The overall program was financially supported by the EU but I received support by my sending organization in Germany, where I’m from, and by my receiving organization which was in Nicosia as well. So, at every point I felt supported or at least knew who I needed to contact in case I would need help. Apart from that I also got some training, one before coming to Cyprus by my sending organization, one after arriving by my receiving organization which was more about my upcoming tasks as well as some general information about them and the country and another training by the national agency together with other volunteers who are in Cyprus. I also had a mentor but I never really needed her help or support.

Besides this support and preparation, volunteering was more about helping other people and broadening my horizons as well as learning new skills.

During my volunteering experience I learned a lot about my own culture especially in contrast to other cultures. I felt more as a European and connected to the people from other European countries.

Furthermore, I developed many skills that will continue to be helpful in the future, such as communication and social skills, speaking and learning a foreign language, integrating in another country and culture but also some personal development skills.

Despite that I could tell the impact of my presence on the children I worked with. Not only did I teach them something about my own culture and language but I brought an international/European view to them. A lot of them didn't know much about the EU or the possibilities you have as a European citizen such as volunteering in the ESC program. And I believe that is the purpose of those programs. To broaden your horizon by connecting with people from all over Europe. To help and support another community, environment or in my case spread awareness of other cultures. The aim is to get a more internationally connected society that helps and supports each other. And even if what you are doing in your project seems rather small it can still have a huge impact on other people.

Overall I would totally recommend doing a volunteering project with the ESC as it helped me so much growing as a person and I'll never forget this time in my life.

My organization helped me to some degree to arrive. They gave me a short introduction to the project and my tasks, but also information about the country and the organization. Still I was, despite my roommates, quite on my own on the first days and I had to arrive and clean the apartment myself. I would've preferred if someone would've picked us up from the airport since there was no shuttle bus. They helped with issues in the flat or overall issues and in my case they always responded very quickly but I heard from the other apartment that some of their problems didn't get fixed properly for a very long time. Despite that, the living conditions were quite good.

They also left us quite alone in the schools. I would have preferred a small introduction and some tips about what we could do. Especially because in my school no one really gave me any tasks or told me what to do, so I had to figure out everything alone and come up with some ideas. Therefore, it would've been useful to know what previous volunteers did to get some inspiration.

Overall despite those issues, I don't think they did a bad job. I really liked all of our coordinators and felt really welcomed every time we met, but there are those things that they need to improve. Like more initial help in finding your place in Cyprus and in the schools in the beginning and working on fixing problems in the flat quicker or at least improving the communication about those problems.

Sofie Entwurf (Germany) - Unity iOS: Education Volunteers 2021

“My experience as an educational volunteer in Cyprus”



In February 2021 I arrived in Cyprus to start my volunteering project. I chose to do a five month project as an educational volunteer over the platform of the European Solidarity Corps. Therefore I was working in a primary school called Eleneion, which is located close to the old town of Nicosia, the Capital of Cyprus. My school was a small school, with one class per grade.

The more time I spend at school the more personnel tasks I got. At first it was my responsibility to clean the chairs every morning, to check who's missing and to assist the teachers with whatever they needed, which could be making copies, helping during the lessons or preparing art classes etc. Once I got to know the teachers and also the children better, I had a bigger variety of tasks.

I was asked to come up with games which respect the distance and current Covid restrictions to play with the children during the breaks but also during the lessons, to paint the schoolyard and benches with games for the children to play during their breaks and to come up with games for the lessons, for example how to describe pictures in english or to guess capitals of other countries. I was also allowed to teach some PE lessons with the first and second grade which was my favourite subject. We created a circus performance, which we sadly never presented but the process alone was a lot of fun. We also organized a protest together with the sixth grade to show them that even at their young age they have the power to make a change. Together we looked at children all over the world who had an impact or made a visible change and then we started organizing our protest, which took place in front of the school.

Furthermore we created our own bowling game with recycled bottles in the third grade in order to raise awareness to pollution and the waste of plastic bottles in specific. Overall I had a great time at my school and volunteering in general. I learned a lot, I met so many great people, other volunteers, some locals but also teachers and for sure the children, who were the best I could have wished for. For me personally it was the first time working with children this age for such a long period of time and there were definitely some challenges but it was also great to just talk to them, to learn from them and to listen to their background stories and opinions and ideas on specific topics. They really inspired me a lot and I felt honestly welcome to my school. I hope that I could teach them some things as well, but I know for sure that I was able to show them some new possibilities they didn't know before and judging by their curiosity and eagerness I think that they also enjoyed having someone from a completely different countries there.

The six month I spent in Cyprus were a really great decision for me. Not only did I meet awesome people and friends, but I made so many new experiences. I've been in situations I have never encountered before – both positive and negative. I learned how to get more involved and how to be more confident in myself and my ideas. Facing different situations I learned what it means to come from and live in different cultures and how to deal with having different points of view. I got to learn a bit about Cyprus and it's interesting history and of course I got to travel and see all the beautiful places Cyprus has to offer.

Martha Jungeblut (Germany) - UNITY - iOS: Education Volunteers 2021

