

FINAL REPORT EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS

“From animator - to ambassadors - to leaders”

LESZNO, POLAND 13/07/2020 – 09/09/2020



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HOST ORGANISATION: Fundacja Centrum Aktywności Twórczej

SUPPORTING ORGANISATION: Associazione Culturale Link

VOLUNTEER: Fabrizio Parrilli

PREAMBLE

This short report aims to describe the European Solidarity Corps experience *“From animator - to ambassadors - to leaders”* in all its nuances as well as the skills gained in participating in it. For me it was the first experience in an ESC project, and although I have participated in many different Erasmus + programs, youth exchanges and training courses, this project was different than the others and I am thrilled to have achieved the goals set during the application phase. This fantastic challenging experience helped me to work on my emotions and to improve my skills, to widen my knowledge about Erasmus + projects and project management, to never give up and always find a smile even in difficult situations, to listen to others with a much more open mind, to share stories and dreams, to question myself, and to be focused on the long path of my life.



PROJECT SUMMARY

Thanks to this unique experience I had the great opportunity to spend 2 months in Leszno, Poland, where I faced a challenge that was very important for me before leaving: knowing in detail how a foundation involved in working with and for young people works. In addition, during this experience I have had the great lucky to meet wonderful guys and people from all over Europe and non (Italy, Sardinia, France, Spain, Greece, Poland, The Netherlands, Romania, Turkey and Ukraine) who I will always carry with me and with whom I have established a solid relationship that will last even after the end of the project.

An exciting experience, full of moments of happiness, relaxation, joy, emotions, long nights but also of hard work aimed at expanding the knowledge and awareness of volunteering and at organizing recreational activities, intercultural group, sharing ideas and opinions, working with children in summer camps. The ways in which the project was conducted made it a perfect environment for developing and improving my skills: communication, cooperation, language, problem solving, creativity, adaptability and, last but not least, emotions.

Moreover, I have learned many things about Poland and the polish culture. First of all, do not ask to a polish person “how are you buddy?” because he/she will tell you the whole story of his/her life. Secondly, do not bother with a drunk polish guy, you can get in serious trouble; and that the polish police is not as smart as I imagined. Also, do not trust polish forecast. Then, that polish **#CENSORED** everything, that polish food is not as bad as I thought, and that polish vodka is better than the Russian one. However, I have also understood that there are some “hot” topics su **#CENSORED** e marriage, abortion, lgbtq+ rights, euthanasia, immigration, religion, that are better to not mention if you don't want to have a huge discussion about it.

Anyway, I love this country and its people! I knew it and know I am certain of it.



“The world is yours, it is in your hands. Do whatever the fuck you want, but do it right!”

- Vasco Rossi

ACTIVITIES

The program included a wide variety of activities for young people, with the purpose to create a bigger network and also to have fun. We have organised two picnics, one in a park and another one in another city. But the most amazing event was the Youth Day in mid-August: perfect weather, on a lake, a lot of young people and different activities to entertain them.



However, the main activities carried out for 4 weeks were related to summer camps for children. It has been an amazing time. I have worked with Rebeca “the fabulous”, a very kind person who helped me a lot in providing the best result thought for the children, through the games and the workshops. Despite many people referred to me as a “hero” because of the strong and tough character of Rebeca, I have to say that both of us are hero: we conducted a meticulous work of passion, comprehension, happiness, hope, patience, calm. Trust me, working with children is not easy! But we did our best, we supported each other, we had funny moments together and I can proudly say that I am glad to have worked with her. I said this thing a lot of time, but I want to repeat it anyway: remember that in your life you will never know what kind of people and colleagues you can find in your job and your experiences, so it is important to adapt to any circumstances (new environment, new people, new food, new language).

Furthermore, working with children is a great experience and it is exactly why I applied to this program. They gave me a lot of happiness, even though sometimes I wanted to kill some of them. They have let me to become a child once again, the Peter Pan that has never grown. Their smile makes you feel how important is a child. Indeed, children are the ones who are very vital for deciding how the world is going to be after some years. For this reason, if one person can do some good things in the life of a child then there can be change,

at least a slightest change, in the world to come. And if most of them think on same lines then we can hope of a better future ahead. I just want to say thank you to all of them. And thanks to the teachers with whom I have worked: Tanya and Wiky - or Wikipedia - two fantastic persons who always helps and supports you, morally and physically (and make you coffee).



**“History will judge us by the difference we make in the everyday lives of children.”
- Nelson Mandela**

ORGANIZATION

CAT Foundation is a familiar environment where you feel completely comfortable and cuddled. The organization of the activities and events was almost perfect, paying close attention to the establishment of solidarity and fraternal bonds among us volunteers. Of course, at the beginning we found some small difficulties, but I believe it is normal for the fact that we found ourselves in a different environment than just some days before the project, with people who were unknown and so different from us, in terms of language, culture and age. Despite this, we managed to break the ice and immediately integrated into the group, one whole group, very united; also thanks to the impeccable experience of the coordinators (Tanya and Karo) who transformed the activities into an opportunity not only of work but also of games, moments of relax and recreational activities. They have always been able to deliver the coaching sessions, the evaluations, the trainings, using non-formal learning tools that are the basis of the Erasmus + world. Tanya and Karo are two amazing persons, always available, on time, accurate, serious, playful, smiley. If I have to choose between them, I will always choose the cynical Tanya. From them, I have learned that it does not matter what are you doing, if a person asks your help you have to help him or her; that it does not matter how sad you are, you have always to smile; and that the more serious you are in a job or in whatever you are doing, the better it is

for your future career; and, mostly, how to develop our creativity and use our best skills in the best way possible. I think they are the best part of CAT Foundation because they are those who are every day in strict contact with the volunteers. Indeed, just to mention, the bosses of the organization did not know our names, from where we come from and what were we doing in a specific day. But this is also understandable, they have a lot of things to think about and their experience in the field has shown that they work in a very smooth and professional way.

I also want to thank a lot my mentor Boghan. He is very nice and kind, a very good person. I think he is the best mentor that CAT Foundation has, because he was a volunteer of CAT and so he knows what a volunteer needs, despite I did not need his help at all. We spent a crazy night together and he has let me try the best pizza I have ever tried in Poland and luckily it was without ketchup; we drunk a lot in Pub 56, my favourite pub in Leszno and we talked all the night. I am very sorry that he gave me a bottle of white wine and I destroyed it during the way back to home. Mentioning Boghdan: "Shit happens!".



"If you can dream it, you can do it".

- Walt Disney

FREE TIME

We had a lot of fun together, from the trips all around Poland to the time spent playing games and drinking – in quotes - "orange juice". I will never forget those moments, in particular I will never forget the trip to the zoo, the stupid mosquitos, the dwarf challenge in Wroclaw, the volleyball and football matches, the Welcome party in the forest, the chupitos in Poznan, Michel's goodbye party and the "Heaven", the egg from the neighbours, the police control while sitting on the bench, the pizza with ketchup, the Youth Day, the picnic in the park, the truth or dare, the games in Elka, the karaoke, and all the other wonderful moments.

Furthermore, I cannot mention the unexpected week of holiday provided to us by CAT Foundation. We wanted to organize a long trip around Poland and at the beginning even in other countries, but, hopefully and unfortunately at the same time, my lovely soulmate Alice came to visit me. We had a lot of fun, peaceful moments, relax, and of course a **#CENSORED** I am so lucky to have her, she always supports me and my dreams and she never says me to don't do this or that or to don't go here or there. We will spend all the life together and I am glad to announce you that when we will get married one day (not in a church because we are both not religious) we will invite you, so it's time to put some money apart for that: in Italy you give a lot of money for the celebration (minimum 100 euro), thank you in advance!



“Eat, drink and love strong, do not be afraid of death.”

VOLUNTEERS

The participants in this project, people who now I can call “friends”, have realized the effective educational and personal value of the type of education based on sharing, playing and cooperation. I really think that one of the things that have made the difference of this ESC were the participants, as a long term volunteer (the NO-man great crazy alcoholic Michel) said “You are the best group so far” and that’s true! We spent a lot of time together, we travelled around Poland, we drunk a lot of alcohol, we played a lot of games, we organized dinners and lunches in our own flats. Yes the flats, our cozy flats: Walowa, never been there, there is a legend that says that if you go to this house you can find small dwarfs playing strip poker and drinking liters of beer; Niepodleglosci, the best one in my opinion, my lovely peaceful quiet flat, maybe too quiet, so quiet that you could listen ants organizing the next attack to our bathroom; and then Elka, the crazy flat where all the parties have been organized and where the worst and best things happened.

For this reason, it is very important to have good people around you and hopefully I found them. However, to be honest, I believe that some of the volunteers were not really involved into the volunteering life of a person who is living one of the best experiences of his/her life, abroad, in a different context, with new friends. Some of them did not participate in most of the long nights spent together at talking and discussing about our lives, dreams, fears, expectations, emotions; and others were stingy and at the same time afraid of spending money to travel and to go out. And this is why I have had a different relationship with each one of them. Certainly, we cannot be friend with all the people in the world, but at least to share this wonderful short experience as much time as we could do. I want to say sorry if sometimes I looked like rude and unpolite and I am sorry if sometimes my strong, stubborn, selfish character has overtaken the best part of my personality.



Therefore, I want to briefly describe all of them, they gave me something in a good or bad way and it is thanks to them if this experience is unforgettable. But I warn you in advance. I used the best of my sense of humour:

- Alberto, my fantastic lovely roommate, los cojones. I can easily say that he is the best roommate/flatmate I have ever had (and I had a lot of them in my life). He is very warm, kind, helpful, focused, healthy, strong, funny, and hopefully he doesn't fart and snore at night. I will always bring him - caption - "inside me", into my heart, and also on my arm (he gave me 4 zloty to have a tattoo).
- Mikhailis, or Mikhollaris or Mitsotakis, my funny malaka muni. We are very similar, and I thought since the very first moment we were going to be very friends. As it is said, "una fazza, una razza". He is unique in his genre/gender and he has a very huge sense of humour, and I love it, even if he does not accept the fact that his hairy ass is not as beautiful as he thinks. Maybe useful but not beautiful.
- Miriam, known as the sexy party animal. She is the person that always smiles at you, the sunshine in a rainy day, the vodka in a beer festival. We spent a lot of time together having fun, playing funny games, drinking, telling our stories and dreams. I admire her strength, her passion and hard work towards children (and parties) and I'm quite sure she will become a very good sexy teacher.
- Gabriele, the amazing. There is no other word to describe him: amazing, that actually has become the motto of the project. He is always available for everything, every request or help you have. As we use to say in Italy "if I ask you a hand, you give me your arm".
- Sara, the only non-Italian person of the project. She is the perfect representation of a Sardinian person: stubborn, talkative, kind, warm-hearted, tender. We have very similar political and social ideas and this made very easy for us to spend time together. I am sorry I have missed the moment when she fell down in the river during the kayaking.
- Claudia, the Dutch-Polish "ish" sunflower. Very open to any kind of dialogue and ready to any kind of adventure. She exactly represents the beauty of being a multicultural person: serious as a Polish, crazy as a Dutch, and funny as a drunk German during the Oktoberfest.
- Greta, my psychedelic Italian flatmate. I am sure she will realize every dream she has in her drawer, and she will overcome every obstacle in her life starting from throwing out the bio trash bag. I wanted to have slept as much time as she did and sorry if I have been closing the coffee machine so strong for all this period.
- Rebeca, my selfie-lover partner in job. She is very kind and open-minded and I think she will become a great doctor, or, at least, I hope so. She has demonstrated how much patient and calm I am, and I thank her for that and for all the moments spent together. And sorry if you are not good in one of these pictures but I will not delete and edit them.
- Tom, the heartbreaker smart French-British guy. This mix makes him a weird person, in good terms, of course. The youngest of the group, but he doesn't think or act like a teenager and that is great. Hopefully no one of you has met me when I was 18. I hope you'll #CENSORED a or at least the preliminaries; if not, do it as soon as possible.
- Sonia, my creepy Polish flatmate. She is a very good and quiet person, very Polish, maybe too Polish and too quiet, very different from me and my ideals. I wish her to have a family with her boyfriend as soon as she can and give birth to at least 5 children: 2 Catholics, 2 Muslims, and please one atheist.
- I also want to thank all the long-term volunteers: especially Baser and Michel, but also Anna and Alexis, to have been since the first moment always available, despite the last weeks Anna and Alexis they were more focused on playing strip poker with the dwarfs in Walowa than enjoying the last moments with the rest of the group.

In conclusion, I am grateful to have come here and have slept so little time. I lived every single moment of this experience and I have no regrets for anything. I just want to say thank you, to the organization, to my friends, and to the European Union that has provided us young people to participate in such projects. The approach to learning through volunteering is different from all the others that I know and have practiced before the project. In fact, the boundary between learning new skills and abilities and the fun and sense of

freedom that comes with non-formal education cannot be clearly drawn. In my opinion, I see this as one of the best ways of learning for life. Therefore, I believe that anyone can find himself/herself in such a project and anyone has to do this kind of projects at least one in his/her life, but only if you are open-minded and ready to learn new skills and be ready to any kind of adventure, going out of your comfort zone.





“If you feel like you’re losing everything, remember that trees lose their leaves every year and they still stand tall and wait for better days to come.”

DZIEKUJE FOR THIS AMAZING EXPRECIENCE... I WILL MISS YOU...

SINCERELY,

YOUR FABRY or FABRICIO