

HUNGARIAN EVALUATION ON THE PROJECT “SCIENCE OF BOOMERANG”

The Science of Boomerang was a youth exchange, organized by Youth Senate Tallinn and supported by the European Commission. The aim of Erasmus+ is to contribute to the Europe 2020 strategy for growth, jobs, social equity and inclusion, as well as the aims of ET2020, the EU's strategic framework for education and training. Erasmus+ also aims to promote sustainable development among its partners in the field of higher education, and the contribution for achieving the objectives of the EU Youth Strategy. The Erasmus exchange program is one of the greatest cultural and character building programs that you can have in your whole life. A participant has a chance to spend 7-10 days in an international atmosphere, where people are open-minded and ready to get to know new cultures and other's perspectives from different matters. A wide range of topics can be found, from which you can choose the most suitable for yourself, for example learning more about healthy lifestyle or have a look inside the filming procedures.

Our project had taken place between the 16th and 24th of October in Palmse, Estonia. 10 country were participating in the program, including Austria, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, Macedonia, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Turkey, which meant 51 people plus 2 professional facilitator, Viktoria Matrašilina and Aleksandar Jevtimov. Every member came from an organization from their home country. The Hungarian team took part through a Budapest-based non-governmental organization (NGO), Institute for Cultural Relations Policy (ICRP). It fosters scientific education, public dialogue regarding cultural relations policy and cooperation between intercultural entities. It aims to promote the protection of International Human Rights and recognition of cultural diversity and heritage in an interdependent world. ICRP's mission is to build up online resources, operate information service, organize international conferences, seminars, summer schools and support publications related to cultural relations policy (CRP). The aim of this youth exchange was to reshape the perceptions of youth in order to improve the availability and participation rates of young people in volunteering projects and community programs. In the interest of reaching these goals, we usually took four sessions per a day and during those times we discussed topics such as what is formal and non-formal education, what are the differences and similarities of the two concept. Furthermore, we learnt about the benefits of volunteering or



had a chance to get familiar with the European Voluntary Service (EVS) and among other things gain more information about how we can apply for an EVS project.

“THE SCIENCE OF BOOMERANG”

At the very beginning, the extraordinary size of the group was a scary factor for all of us. We had exactly one week, not just to get to know each other, but to become close friends and obtain a significant improvement in our volunteering experience, as well as to acquire the most about volunteering. As usual, the first few days - the first one in particular - were aimed



to “break the ice”, and let us knowing each other. Throughout the initial part, we were introduced into the topic of formal and non-formal education, which played an important role during the learning process. One of the most thoughtful and educational part was the day, when each country presented the volunteering environment in their home. All 10 teams were well-prepared and made a fascinating presentation, with numerous interesting facts, broadening our scope and notion about these countries. After the presentations, a volunteering workshop was held to discuss the future possibilities in volunteering. As groups were formed to think about ways to promote volunteering, a forwarding discourse took place, when exciting ideas have occurred among the participants. In most of the comments, the importance of strengthening volunteering in high schools, and raising awareness among parents were mentioned. Needless to say, in the meantime, different interesting activities took place, which all redounded the cohesion of the group. In the evening, the social committee provided entertainment for the rest of the group, during these occasions another chance appeared to get to know each other even better. In the following, the attention focused on the

cornerstone of volunteering, on EVS, of course. Some of the participants were already familiar with the European Voluntary Service, but as the younger generation took the majority of the group, they had a really conducive day, as they were introduced into the topic of professional volunteering, besides, they were able to learn from really experienced ones. Furthermore, we discussed opportunities and purposes of volunteering, not just within Europe. As we really had busy and effective days behind us, a free afternoon provided some refreshment and leisure time for the group, but it also left some time for the countries, to be able to prepare for the Eurovision contest, later on that that evening. Each country had to present a song, picked by another country, which, of course have resulted in hilarious moments. Eventually, the Macedonia took the prize with an outstanding performance, beating Germany and Austria on the chunking. The following day, the preparation for the volunteering event kept us busy. 5 different options were available and was including an animal shelter, dog walking, futsal tournament journalism, a youth center for kids and a dancing session. As everybody was preparing for the event within their own team, the group addressed, they wanted to reach greater goals and even more people. Out of nowhere, an idea just popped to make a flash-mob in the middle of the Old Town, and every one of us liked the idea, to form the word “VOLUNCARE”, on our own with real-life statues.

An event was also created for the occasion which you can get informed about here: <https://www.facebook.com/events/1057549144367026>



Also, a lot of stickers and little notes were created by us, with a few nice words for the people in Tallinn, emphasizing the importance of volunteering. The planning process had gone through quickly, therefore we felt ready for our volunteering. Each team was really enthusiastic not just about what awaited us, but also the fact, that most of us was going to work with kids, or animals, so we were doing something for others. In one word, - which we agreed on earlier, how volunteering can be described - “selflessness”, and with this thought in our mind, all of us spent a lovely afternoon with kids and animals. After each team had finished, we gathered in at the main square of the Old Town, to present our flash-mob. The whole performance contained a freezing moment, when everybody had to stand tight, a short dance and eventually, the human statues. Our movement fortunately attracted a lots of people, including habitants and tourist groups as well. In the end of the flash-mob, we also distributed our handmade flyers and lollypops.



We were also giving away free hugs, for the satisfaction of all people!

As a closure of this useful and heart-warming day, we held our party-night, with a lots a games and stories involved. For the last day, only the evaluation remained, also to discuss the outcome of the volunteering event. It was amazing to see, that each and every one us gained something courtesy of the V-event, furthermore, many people assured, they will consider volunteering as a more important part of their lives, than before. Happily, we agreed, that we were all satisfied not with just the performance, but with all our actions throughout the week. It was amazing to see, how some of these lives have changed only in a few days. As one of the last moments, all of us created an envelope for short (or longer) messages from each other.

In general, it can be said, this Youth Exchange had an undisputable outcome, not just in a personal, but a professional way too, as we made prosperous discussion about the importance of volunteering, and how it can and should be implemented in the future.

VOLUNTEERING IN HUNGARY

One of our tasks in the project was that made a research and then introduce the current volunteering situation in our country. In the following section you can read about the highlights of this topic.

Volunteering has a more than a century long history in Hungary. We know about the first well-organized companies from after the year of Conciliation (1867). Christian institutions encouraged people to help the poor ones with foods and clothes. During and between the World Wars, these activities were really important, because there were thousands of people with serious wounds, and they also had to suffer by having nothing to eat and wear. The war it had all changed because under Soviet influence it was forbidden to do any kind of civil group activity. Fortunately, in the 21st century the number of people who do volunteering is increasing.

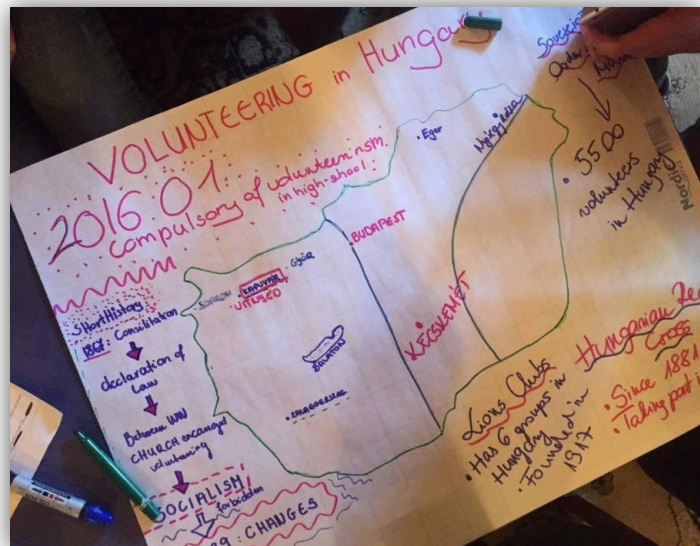
Due to a fresh law, from 1st of January 2016 every student in high schools have to do 50 hours of volunteer work. They can choose the organization where they want to do that and the type of volunteering too, such as helping animals, give food to homeless people, working in cultural field or in the medical area.

There are lots of different non-governmental organizations in Hungary. Leo is one them.

Everyone can be a member under

age 30. Leo is the part of the worldwide organization called Lions. Their aim is to care about children with disabilities and the ones in poverty. They have clubs in 5 different cities in Hungary. Another popular opportunity is to join the International Red Cross. They emphasize the importance of prevention and education of health. Beside that they help whenever their help is needed e.g in case of natural catastrophes like flooding. They also collect charity donations, not just money but clothes too.

Though, people changed their mind about volunteering after the Socialism, according to statistics most of them are between age 30-50. Otherwise, many young people get involved to volunteering even if most of them only participate in occasionally events like preparing gifts for children before Christmas.



THE POWER OF VOLUNTEERING

What we gained?

“Don’t despise your contributions to Humanity. Every little kind deed counts.”
— Lailah Gifty Akita

Many of us don’t immediately identify that the time and the altruism we give to others can be considered volunteering. The definition of Volunteering is: „the time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain.” This definition aligns with the United Nations view that volunteering ‘should be for the common good. It should directly or indirectly benefit people outside the family or household or else benefit a cause, even though the person volunteering normally benefits as well. The benefits of volunteering are enormous to us. Let’s see what we gained during the volunteering project!

1. Experience of spreading kindness, spreading love

Since we organized a whole day event and a flash-mob to raise attention on the importance of volunteering. This event had a meaningful, positive impact on our community. We learnt how we can share our vibe, our kindness with others. We made little compliments and gave it to passengers on the street, or people in cafeterias and supermarkets. It was amazing to see the reactions. Additionally, it amused us to see that this event had a real and valuable positive affect on people.



2. Developing new skills



The volunteering event helped us to learn new skills, gain experience in rather professional environment. Besides, volunteering can help you keep your skills sharp, or use existing ones in new ways. The group separately took part in different actions of volunteering from Youth Center activities with kids, dancing classes with

youngsters and some of us visited an animal shelter to help the staff there, or taking dogs for a walk in another part of Tallinn. Especially the first two ones required social skills, like patience, empathy or communication with a language barrier. In general, we agreed, we all had fun while doing something for others, which not just felt really good, but was productive as well.

3. #teamspirit and friendships - Meaningful way to make new friends!

We experienced the power when you create some great thing within team. We discovered our creative side while we worked together. During the project, we were likely to get into a situation out of our comfort zone. We got the chance to try something new and built a real sense of achievement. It was amazing to share the positive impact of this event with each other. We worked a lot together and after we were so glad about the success of the project.



4. Motivation & Inspiration and “The happiness effect

After the volunteering event, we felt how many things that we can do to help others. We realized that we were able to contribute our world to become a better place. Every day deserves a chance to find something little to add. During this project we concentrated to organize our workshop and prepare our volunteering event. All of preparation and the event as well helped us to forget our every day's problems. We reduced the stress and we became more energetic and inspired due to the experience and the process of volunteering.

“Helping others kindles happiness, as many studies have demonstrated. When researchers at the London School of Economics examined the relationship between volunteering and measures of happiness in a large group of American adults, they found the more people volunteered, the happier they were, according to a study in Social Science and Medicine.”

András Abaffy, Mirjam Szakács, Daniella Vecsei, Bálint Torma