



**EUROPEAN
SOLIDARITY
CORPS**

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Volunteers taking action at home and abroad

**YMCA
BOURNEMOUTH**

Bournemouth/Poole/Christchurch



SUPPORT & ADVICE

ACCOMMODATION

FAMILY WORK

HEALTH & WELLBEING

TRAINING & EDUCATION

EASTER TRADITIONS

HUNGARIAN TRADITIONS by Sara

My favorite Hungarian Easter tradition is locsolkodás (Wet Monday), loosely translated as 'sprinkling the womenfolk', practised in town and countryside. On Easter Monday, boys are



allowed to sprinkle girls with water or perfume – but traditionally, a bucket of water is thrown on them! – and then the girls offer them painted eggs, homemade treats or a little shot of alcohol in return. This alcohol is usually Pálinka, the popular Hungarian fruit spirit. Often, men and little boys learn a short poem to accompany the sprinkling. We call these kind of poems „Locsolóvers”

Traditional Easter meals in Hungary involve ham, boiled eggs and braided loaves called kalács, pickled horseradish and lamb. This was a time when the long fast for Lent was being broken, so a rich meal was part of the celebration. One of my Hungarian friends told me that her favourite thing about Easter is that she

can eat as much breakfast as she likes!



ITALIAN TRADITIONS by Giulia

In Italy on Easter Sunday it is customary to go to mass and then celebrate with one's family by having a lunch or dinner. One usual thing in Italy is to cook lamb accompanied by various side dishes.

A typical Easter cake is the colomba pasquale, covered with almonds and sugar. It is also customary to exchange chocolate novelties among friends and relatives.

Mondays, on the other hand, are always spent with friends. We meet up in the park or at home to barbecue and spend the whole day eating and playing board games and group games.

GERMAN TRADITIONS by Marie

In Germany there are all kinds of Easter traditions. One of my favourites as a child was to blow out, paint and decorate eggs and hang them in an "Easter tree", made out of different fruit tree boughs to decorate the house.

Also, when I was little I really enjoyed painting eggs with my grandma a few days before Easter Sunday which were then hidden in the garden for the children to look for on Easter Sunday before a festive family meal.

Another tradition is the Easter bonfire which is lit in towns and villages as a symbol for the sun and the upcoming spring.

Of course there are also many food traditions. "Berliner" are one of my favourites. They are like doughnuts, filled with jam and topped with powdered sugar. Another classic is a braided sweet bread with raisins and sugar cubes which can be enjoyed with any sweet topping.



VOLUNTEERS WHO STAYED ON AFTER VOLUNTEERING

Some of our European volunteers choose to stay in the UK after their placements. We asked them about their experiences and what made them stay.



LOLA

- Why did you decide to stay in the UK after your experience?

I was already in the UK before my experience, and I was able to get the pre-settlement status because of that. I decided to stay because there were more opportunities here than back in Spain (my home country)

- What are you doing now?

I'm starting a new job here in London

- Has your volunteering experience influenced your choice to stay in some way?

Not really. What led me to take this decision was having the pre-settlement status. I knew if I left and wanted to come back later on in the future, it would be more complicated.

- What are your future plans?

I'm not sure yet: travel as much as I can, learn a little more than that and keep finding stuff that makes me happy. The plan is to stay in London for some time and enjoy my new job to the fullest! After that, who knows? The future could hold anything for me!

- What was your biggest challenge to face in another country?

Probably the language barrier. Even if I could communicate until some point, the feeling of not being able to express myself as freely as I'd in my native language, or the fact that I had to pay lots of attention to understand certain things (something you usually don't even think about while talking in your native language) was —still is— frustrating at some points. That and building a whole new life with that barrier!

GIULIA

- Why did you decide to stay in the UK after your experience?

Before doing this experience I lived in London for a year. Then because of the pandemic I had to go back to Italy. In the meantime I was looking for an experience to do but in the field of communication and marketing so I came back to England. After 5 months I thought that I could do my volunteer work remotely and at the same time I could try to find a job as a digital marketer in England. This pushed me to stay.

- What are you doing now?

I now work in the marketing department of a company in London and at the same time continue my volunteer work for the YMCA.

- Has your volunteering experience influenced your choice to stay in some way?

Yes. When I came back to Italy I was quite convinced to stay there, also because initially I didn't like England so much. But I only considered going back for the project.



- What are your future plans?

My plans are to travel as much as possible and to learn as much as possible about digital marketing work.

- What was your biggest challenge to face in another country?

I think it was the language first and then finding a job without concrete experience in the marketing world.



MARIA

- Why did you decide to stay in the UK after your experience?

I decided to stay longer because I didn't feel like it was my time to go back home, I needed to live the essence of London since it was one of my dreams since I came here for the first time when I was a child

- What are you doing now?

When my volunteer placement ended, I decided to become an AuPair while studying for a master's degree.

- What are your future plans?

I don't know how to answer this question because it's still unknown for me hahaha The only thing I know is that I am really looking forward to discovering it.

- What was your biggest challenge to face in another country?

I would say that the most challenging thing about facing another country it's the language and to get used to native people behave, which can be weird at first. But it's true that being a volunteer for the first instance when I got to England, made this easier since we are living with other foreign volunteers and we all understand each other.

CORINA

- Why did you decide to stay in the UK after your experience?

Being an ESC volunteer was definitely what influenced my decision to stay in the UK. Initially, my plan was to come to Bournemouth for one year and then go back home to Romania to continue my studies. During my volunteering year with the YMCA, I fell in love with the country and with the English culture and I realised that here, there are a lot of opportunities for me to develop both professionally and personally. I was planning to pursue a career in mental health, because I had a background in Psychology. Therefore, after I finished my ESC year, I applied for a Master's Degree Course at Bournemouth University. Being in the Youth Department, gave me a lot of confidence in working with children and young people, so I decided to study mental health, in particular conditions that have an onset in childhood or that develop throughout the lifespan, such as Autism or ADHD. Moreover, whilst I was conducting my degree in Clinical and Developmental Neuropsychology, I was still working as an Assistant Youth Worker at YMCA in Fusion Youth Club, where I was involved in supporting children and young people who were passionate about music in providing a space and resources for them to practice, perform and



nourish their musical skills (singing, drumming etc.).

- What are you doing now?

At the moment, I live in London. I moved here in January 2020, after I graduated from Bournemouth University. I work in mental health services in the NHS, providing support in schools for children young people who struggle with anxiety, low-mood or emotion regulation difficulties. I also do a lot of preventative work, by delivering workshops and group interventions, both for children and young people and their parents, equipping them with self-help strategies and raising awareness about mental health.

- What was your biggest challenge to face in another country?

My biggest challenge has always been being away from my family, especially during the Pandemic, when I couldn't see my parents for about 18 months. I miss them a lot, but I am very happy here and as long as I am happy, they are happy, too.

- What are your future plans?

I love my job and being in London. There is a lot to do, explore and discover. So, for now, I can't see myself being anywhere or doing anything else. I would love to continue to develop my career and my goal is to apply for the Doctorate of Clinical Psychology. However, this can take time, even years. I am also excited to apply for the Settled Status in 6 months and hopefully in less than 2 years, I will apply for British Citizenship.

AURELIE

- Why did you decide to stay in the UK after your experience?

To remain in the UK was my intention. I fell in love with this country as a child and always wanted to live here so it felt natural for me to stay.

- What are you doing now?

I'm still working in the YMCA Building Services with my amazing colleagues.

- Has your volunteering experience influenced your choice to stay in some way?

My volunteering confirmed my passion for painting and decoration. The kindness of my team made me happy to stay with the YMCA.

- What are your future plans?

For now, my plan is to stay at YMCA Bournemouth and enjoy

my role.



DEBORA

- Why did you decide to stay in the UK after your experience?

I had wanted to come to the UK even before hearing about EVS. I was attracted to its rich culture and since I'd visited London years ago, I know I wanted to move here at some point. During my EVS I learned more about the UK and decided I didn't want to return home to my monotonous life. I wanted to stay and be independent, have fun and continue travelling. I also like the multiculturalism you can find here. In my case I returned to Spain for a couple of years and then came back basically for the opportunities that the UK offers.

- What are you doing now?

Right now, I'm focused on finishing my Bachelor's in Social Work and trying to find a more rewarding job that will allow me more quality free time. I also recently started mentoring an ESC volunteer too. The pandemic made me reconsider life a bit and now that the world is opening again, I just want to dedicate my time to pursuing my passions and



doing enriching things like trying to visit all the places I can and trying new restaurants and activities in the local area.

- Has your volunteering experience influenced your choice to stay in some way?

I found the experience of community volunteering very rewarding. I discovered that there are more social projects here than in my country, so by staying here, I thought it would be easier to do further this experience. I became more confident through living abroad during my volunteering, so I saw the possibility of

getting a job and living here. I also wanted to keep challenging myself by continuing to live abroad after my

EVS.

- What are your future plans?

I know I'll stay here at least a few years while I finish my studies and gain more experience to complement my learning. I know I want to work in something benefitting others to contribute a little bit to the world but I'm not sure yet exactly what I'll do. I think there are many options and I don't always see myself doing the same thing. My plan is to become a Social Worker when I finish but I'm also interested in freelancing.

I'm considering adding Psychology to my studies in the future as it's a profession with different paths that doesn't strictly require working for one organisation or in a fixed place. I don't know where I'll end up living. I love it here but I can also see myself living in a Mediterranean country one day. I guess I'll just see what the future brings me!

- What was your biggest challenge to face in another country?

I can say with certainty it was the language. I think with effort, you can make yourself understood and figure out what others are saying, but for some things it's quite difficult day to day. I didn't have any problems with simple things like shopping or taking the bus but carrying out some of my volunteering tasks was very

difficult in the beginning. I didn't understand the tasks I had to do and

I wasn't able to interact with young people in the projects or support them. The worst was attending meetings,

training or long presentations because I always finished the day with a headache.

Also, to really connect with people or have deep conversations was tricky so I felt a bit lonely during the first months.



NINA

- Why did you decide to stay in the UK after your experience?

Before coming to the UK I was traveling and living in different places and I wanted to do a different experience and live in a different place. Initially my idea was to stay for nine months, but then I realised

it was the first time I wanted to stay longer in one place.

I don't know exactly what has influenced my feeling, but I feel that in the UK I feel freer, less judged by the people around me, there is a different mentality and there are many opportunities.

- What are you doing now?

while I was doing the volunteering project I had always had the dream of being an actress but I had never really tried to do anything with it. during my free time while I was volunteering I decided to start a small course at Bournemouth university and at the same time I started looking for work as an actress. In addition to volunteering and looking for work as an actress, I decided to look for another job that would allow me to have a bit more stability and that would be related to my volunteering and I found a job as a part-time support worker.

- Has your volunteering experience influenced your choice to stay in some way?

Yes I could say that my volunteer experience influence my choice because I knew that I don't to stop here but I wanted to do something more and thanks to my voluntary work I realised that the social part was something for me.

- What are your future plans?

My future plans I'll like stay in England for a while and think about my career, I can't see really far.

- What was your biggest challenge to face in another country?

For me my biggest challenge was the Brexit because I have the visa and I have problem to stay.

2021: A PEAK OF EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY FOR YMCA BOURNEMOUTH

The New Year already seems so far away but it has been a time for us to reflect on last year's achievements. Angela looks back at some of the highlights...

2021 saw the largest numbers of ESC volunteers passing through our doors and we achieved our dream of brokering volunteers to our community partners.

Antonella and Estrella supported the work of Water Lily Café, helping isolated older people and victims of domestic abuse. Juan, Marton and Jana supported the work of Somerford Youth Centre, including their much-needed food bank. Marieke then Lola volunteered for Faithworks Wessex, supporting Half Time and other joint projects supporting homeless people. Alba volunteered for St Christopher's Church, particularly in their youth club. Nina was based at Hope Housing, supporting their clients and helping manage the charity shop.

Meanwhile at the YMCA, there was Aurelie then Mariano volunteering in our Building Services. Pamira and Sara T then Mate and Caye supported our Chatterbox project and Bruno helped out with our wider youth work activities. Maria, Giulia and Arianna have helped with our communications and fundraising activities. Helen has spread herself across Teddy's Pre-School, holiday clubs and youth work. Iringo then Christian were supporting our Chaplaincy Team last year and Sophie was based at the Junction up until lockdown.

As well as all these long term volunteers, we hosted 5 short term European volunteers in Bournemouth last year and 5 more volunteered in an online research project. Another 5 Europeans joined 10 of our Chatterboxes for an online You Are Whole campaign. On top of those 10, we've supported 18 more UK volunteers since 2020 to give their time to local projects. This is an area we're expanding every year for local people.

Although Brexit is forcing us to wind down our European volunteering later this year, we can certainly look back with pride at nearly 11 years' of growth in our local and European volunteering partnerships. Each placement has not only changed the life of the volunteer (sometimes immeasurably) but also impacts and ripples through our organisation and community.

All I can say is "Thank You" to each and every one of them and here's to the next year ahead!



STRANAIDEA

Stranaidea was born 36 years ago and only recently started sending YMCA Bournemouth volunteers. We interviewed Silvia to find out more about what they do in Turin, Italy.

We offer different types of services to people: day-care facilities for people with different types of disabilities for both minors and adults.

We have a project with another social cooperative where we manage refugees and political asylum seekers, two dormitories for the municipality of Turin in one of these we have started a daytime activity with a group of people who decide to join with the aim of bringing people closer to job opportunities and looking for a house.

We run a company crèche within the polytechnic of turin.

There are other centres that take in minors up to the age of 18 who have other types of psychiatric disabilities that are treated individually or with group activities.

In spring 2021 we absorbed a type b cooperative (Agridea), that's why we are a+b and in this cooperative we take care of the management of public green areas, waste collection.

At the beginning we had 120 people, now we are more than 400.

We have a European sector that includes ESC but not only European design.

Another sector we deal with is that of social and community theatre which is proposed within Stranaidea inside the centres but also outside on various themes.

There is a field of active citizenship, we provide the possibility of activating apprenticeships for people with disabilities or difficulties.

We are trying to create esc projects concerning the environment.

When I arrived the YMCA was already part of the partners.



Volunteers can be useful to organisations like YMCA Bournemouth because they commit themselves, their knowledge and their personality to a project. Even where they don't have prior experience, they are willing to commit and develop with the combined help of our organisations.