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Hello everyone,

I am Evin Arslan. I am from Turkey and I went to Zabok, Croatia for the European Solidarity Corps project for 10 months. I can say that this experience was sometimes challenging, and sometimes great. But I am proud of myself for sure!

Sometimes a good experience we have brings with it good news. Last summer, I went to Portugal for the Erasmus+ Project for 12 days. I met many people and also Croatian people. After this project, one day my Croatian friend sent the project announcement from Zagor. Also, I was searching for ESC projects because I wanted to see other countries and improve my English. But also, I wanted to go on a project related to my profession. When I saw the announcement, I decided to apply. Because I was wondering about Croatia and the Croatian language and project tasks are related to my occupation.

When I came here, I was so excited. I was living in another country first time. I have a house, my room in Croatia. Sometimes I was cooking coffee and just watch Zabok. There was nothing basically, but I was in another country and this feeling was excited! Zabok is small city. There are about 9 thousand people. So I was walking to everywhere.

I met a lot of people. When you live in your own country, sometimes meet with people who different countries are hard. But if you are a volunteer, you can meet with other volunteers, Erasmus students, local people etc. ed many things about other cultures, especially about Balkan history. I visited five Balkan countries except for Croatia. And I had a goal; I decided to visit all the significant places in Croatia. Of course, I couldn't visit all the cities, but I saw more than 14 cities and it was so much fun.

I went on my first solo trip during the project. At first, I was nervous but when I started the journey, I didn't want to go back home. I met a lot of amazing people and I didn't want to go back to normal life. But of course, I went back and I started to plan for new journeys!

If I explained what I did during volunteering, I worked to support the digital view of Mreža udruga Zagor. When there were workshops, I took photos, and shoot videos. I edited videos. I had my

projects. I started to make a podcast there. My podcast series name was "Stories of European Solidarity Corps (ESC) Volunteers". I talked with people who participated in the ESC project, and I asked them questions about their ESC experiences. It was important for me because young people don't have a lot of information about ESC but it is a really good opportunity for living abroad, improving language skills etc. In this podcast, I asked what problems they faced, and what they would recommend to those who want to apply for the ESC project.

Also, my other personal project was to publish a magazine for youth. I wanted to do it because I wanted to contact young people and create a free zone for young people. mla-dost.dobro could be a chance for the creative participation of young people. We had our first meeting with young people on 9 February and we published the first issue of mla-dost.dobro magazine on 1 April 2022. We continue it and we have a good team. We published eight issues until now.

Coordinating the process of the magazine, writing articles, creating the podcast and posters were very instructive. I highly recommend that go to the ESC and try to make your best. Because it is not just volunteering, if you choose the good project for you, also it can be job experience. It was like that for me.

Meeting people from different cultures is amazing! I made great friends, and we still talk to each other. So, I am so happy to have this experience.



Zabok



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