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**& SYSTEM
GENERATION**

EUROPEAN VOLUNTARY SERVICE

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I'm Sara Sadek and I'm 22 years old. I'm coming from Italy and I'm studying Foreign Languages in Grenoble (France).

I'm a short term volunteer in S&G. I've started my short term EVS in August in Ankara, the capital of Turkey.



My activities are the following: prepare tea and serve it in the Clock Tower, assist the main teachers in the American Kindergarten, work with the elders in the Elderly House, write YouthExchange Projects in the office, teach Italian/Spanish to locals and participate to English Conversation Club.



During the Bayram (islamic holiday) I visited the following cities: Istanbul, Pamukkale, Kappadocia, Beypazari. I had an amazing experience in S&G because of my beautiful team work and working environment.

**I highly
recommmed such
an experience
in Turkey.**

Dear lector I'm Marc from Barcelona.

I am volunteer to S&G and this
is my experience:

One month in Ankara, exactly
2580km away from my home
and I still remember as if it were
yesterday the night before the
departure day. The fear invaded
me and I could not avoid a tear
but despite everything I was
ready to embrace an adventure
that would last exactly two
months.

The days passed and how I could
never imagine I experienced
constant change of moods, I had
days when I loved Turkey and
others days when I felt the need
to go home. The difficulty of
having a part of you that needs
to return to your comfort zone is
definitely powerful.

I cannot say that the experience
is incredible because it is not,
although today it is one of the
days when I love this place.
Sometimes communication is
not easy, I am one of those who
have decided to embark on the
adventure having a level of
"Spanenglish" and I cannot deny
that it was something that
worried me.



However, I am in a group
who despite the linguistic
differences and cultural
barrier, help me and give me
English classes. Many people
ask me why I have chosen
Turkey and the truth is that I
do not know, but one thing I
have clear in my mind is that
I would repeat this project
only if it would be with the
same team. During this
month I lived with people
who have made me reinforce
the idea that a country is just
a border and a passport - just
a piece of paper.

**If I would
recommend you to do
an EVS project?**

Definitely yes, but do not
expect your experience to
be perfect because it won't
be.

Maybe you won't like the
activities or your
accommodation is not
appropriate or your English is
not with a "British Accent".
Sometimes you might think
you're wasting your time, but
do not be fooled, it is just that
part of you that wants to go
back to your comfort zone.

**I am lucky
because I met
people who make
my experience
better, but as I
said above, today
I love this place,
but tomorrow we
will see...**

Hey, there! I am Dumitrita, I come from Romania, I am 22 years old and currently studying law at 'Alexandru Ioan Cuza' University from Iasi.

After finishing the first year of university I had my first international experience which was Work and Travel programme and opened my appetite for working in an international environment. Later, I studied in Athens for one semester thanks to Erasmus+ Scholarship after which I found myself more like a person open towards challenging experiences, always looking to get out of my comfort zone and surpass myself.

One year has already passed since I entered in Erasmus Student Network family as a volunteer, our mission is to provide opportunities for cultural understanding,



integration process and self-development under the principle of Students helping students. I had the chance to interact with people from all over the world and to be part of organisation committee for social and cultural events, movie nights, international dinners and of course, parties.

Now, I am in Ankara, doing short-term EVS. Youth Caravan is the project that gathered volunteers from 5 countries with different cultures and challenged us to work and live together.

But no matter how different our backgrounds are, we all feel the happiness of helping the others, the love for traveling, and the will to learn, develop and to share the learned.

- **Hi! My name is Koki. And yours?**
- **Hi! I am Nice to meet you. Where are you from?**
- **Nice to meet you, too. I am from Bulgaria. And you?**
- **I am from By the way, how old are you?**
- **I am 17, almost 18.**
- **Noooooooooo waaayyyyy!!!!**

In my first month of my EVS in Ankara I was quite often hearing this answer. I am sharing it here with you, because it became sort of inside joke. After all I was still underage.

Many new people met, many new places visited, many new dishes tried, many new things experienced – this is the teaser for my EVS experience in Ankara. Enjoy!

It was a summer day like any other – I was going to school, end-of-year exams had already started, when I suddenly found out about the short-term EVS in Ankara. I was so excited, because it was exactly what I was looking for. I applied for it, I was accepted, I had my flight tickets and everything was prepared. My mother almost went crazy, when I told her I am going to be away from home for two months (after long negotiations she accepted the reality :D). Anyway, on 1st August my adventure started.

This was going to be my seventh flight within two months and I was a little bit tired. After one night travelling with the bus from Sofia to Istanbul I took the plane to Ankara.



I was so sleepy that I spilled my drink in the plane, I almost dropped my food.....

Fortunately, I arrived at my accommodation place without further accidents. It was around 1 pm – you can imagine the temperature in Ankara. The streets were full of people hustling somewhere, handlers were shouting at the passing people trying to convince them to buy their products, nervous car drivers being angry at the traffic and the crossing pedestrians, the muezzin calling the Muslims to pray – welcome to Ankara – to one amazing city combining both the traditions of Turkey and European spirit.

Our accommodation was in the very center of Ankara and when I made my first walk around the area, I was shocked how open-minded people there were. My absolutely favourite place remains Tunali, 20 minutes by walking away from the centre, an area full of young people, there life is going on 24/7. I personally fell in love with this place, because it was also full of hippy shops, where I could spend hours.

Around 15 minutes walking from the center in the opposite direction lead you to one, people would say, conservative area, where you can feel this “traditional” part of Ankara. While walking you feel tempted by the delicious doner which you find everywhere. A couple of steps further you find a narrow street going downhill,



on both sides of which men are selling second-hand wares – from lighters and old watches to laptops “drowning” in dust. While walking along this small streets of the neighbourhood, local people, a.k.a. men drinking tee, holding their tespih in the hand and smoking cigarettes, critically or though with interest will stare at you, so you will feel like a celebrity.

Now we move very fast to Izmir by the seaside, which is said to be the most European city of Turkey, where everyone is dancing and chilling in the park by the sea, where trams are as clean as a hospital, where almost everyone you ask for directions at the street speaks English. I liked Izmir. I liked the views. I liked the spirit of the city – especially the hidden “prostitute street” in the heart of the city. I liked the trams. I liked the reduced ticket price because of Bayram week. I liked the see. I liked the food. But I was still missing something. By the way I still do not know what exactly – **but I felt as if a small part of me was all the time somewhere in Ankara waiting for me to return back home.**



Turkey

second home



Hello, my name is Anca, I'm 30 years old and I'm from Bucharest. I had the pleasure of participating as a volunteer in the capital of Turkey, the city of Ankara. Experience in the capital of Turkey is unique and yet familiar. No matter what time of day or place you are, you will surely see the flag of Turkey waving. Intense red and crescent are highlighted by both natural daylight and daytime artificial light. This symbol is present wherever you are in Ankara, for the Turks know how to boast with it. Turkey is indeed one of the places that I could consider to be my second home. I'd love to have another chance to come back here.

On the first day of the project we had activities with the role of knowledge among the participants, team building and activities of discovering a new country, implicitly of a new culture. **The following countries participated in this project: Romania, Italy, Macedonia, Spain and Bulgaria.**

We had the opportunity to know ourselves, to develop our confidence in us and others, to overcome our limits and to adapt to any conditions.

During my activities I worked in teams. So I developed my ability to work in group and communicate in English. We have been organizing discussion clubs, participating in relaxation activities for children and young people.

I met beautiful young people with different mentalities, with different perceptions of life, people I learned from, people I laughed at and tied my friends. We visited the cities of Rize and Trabzon, located between the Pontic Mountains and the Black Sea, considered to be the "wettest" corner in Turkey and the country's main tea producing region. In addition to tea, the region is also known for kiwi fruit production. The province is mostly rural and very picturesque, with many mountain valleys and high yaylas (meadows). I also had the opportunity to see new places, discover different traditions and cultures such as Nevsehir - Cappadocia, located 320 kilometers from Ankara, the capital of modern Turkey, unfolding as a unique landscape, consisting of caves, tunnels and hundreds of underground cities dug by Hittites more than 3,000 years ago.



It has been a positive, educational experience with advantages in terms of acquiring new information and knowledge on the project theme as well as on the local culture and the countries participating in the project. I'm inspired by the things seen elsewhere and by the ideas of the projects and the other young people.

A New Step In My Learning Process! Two months of theory and practice through non-formal education, along with wonderful people, a new country visited, and a wider bag of knowledge, memories and experiences.

Now, all I have to do is do everything I've learned. I thank everyone for their friendship and for these unforgettable memories!

My name is Ivan, 23 years old person who finished his postgraduate law studies two months ago. Currently, I am enrolled in short-term EVS project, in which I volunteer in the non-governmental organization called System&Generations in the capital city of Turkey, Ankara.

My participation in the project Youth Caravan will last two months (August and September) and so far, after one month has passed, I can say that it is such an enjoyable and valuable experience. Alongside with the international volunteering experience, the process of meeting people from all around the world, practicing and improving your English language, learning basic Turkish, EVS is really opening minds and changing lives.

Some of the daily activities I take part in are visiting places like TAD which is an international kindergarten (preschool) for kids aged 2-6 years. It is a place where the exercises and the learning process are held only in English, so it is such a welcoming place and place where you really lose perception for time.

Another place is Saray, which is center for people with fewer opportunities. It is a complex of buildings where this people get really nice conditions, they live and pass their time there, doing different workshops, exercises and etc.

Me, as a volunteer, I am attending some of their workshops which helped me to get more familiar about the issues this category of people is facing and what is the best way to fight them.



Also, the volunteers can propose some activities and, as an example, last week was reserved for zumba class and dance. I can tell you that those people there, they were really enjoying the dancing on the songs we have chosen for them.

At the same time, the project is created like that that we have enough time to explore Ankara and other parts of Turkey, too. So, the last place I visited, some hours before writing this article was Beypazari, which a small town near the capital, well-know for its festival which is ongoing these days.

The town is famous for the typical architecture, products made from the vegetable carrot - like juice, baklava and many other things.

**Spending a day at
this place was
more than unique
experience!**