

Such an adventure



We are short term volunteers from Romania, Italy and Poland. Gina, Domenico, Noemi, Calin and Julia. These are our stories!

Hi for those who are reading this article about a volunteer, who just came from Romania to join to this amazing project, here in Ankara.

About myself I can tell that I'm 24 years old, my name is Gina (nothing special), I graduated at the Faculty of Fine Arts almost two years ago. I'm coming from Oradea, a beautiful city situated in the North-West of Romania, which is the capital of Art Nouveau in Romania (you should visit it). My first day in Ankara was a little tiring for me, after a long journey, with big luggage, I had the luck to meet Calin, other Romanian volunteer, he came to pick me up from Kizilay center and he showed me around and, of course, he told me about the rules of our apartment which we are sharing for the next months. The next days were about exploring Ankara, meeting better my teammates or flatmates, I considering myself really lucky, because I'm surrounded by this amazing people, each of them with a beautiful and wide knowledge behind.

The System and Generation, our host organization, is well prepared, they are ready to help us and answer to our questions, friendly and kind, they offered us a warm welcome in their institution.

About the projects I can say that I am really happy to be a part of this, one of my favorites is Café Down, where I am helping the staff preparing the Turkish tea and coffee. The staff is made by disabilities people who are working there, they are kind people, innocent, open to share love and kind gestures with everyone.

The first day here it was emotional, because meeting them and saw how kind and lovely they are, hugging you for no reason and offering you help, I realized that we have to learn from these lovely people, the thing is they are more richer inside then we are, we even forget to smile and we are losing ourselves in the everyday life, letting ourselves "corrupted" by the society.

This is just a short part about my first experience, let's say is just the introduction in Ankara and in the S&G family so **Görüşürüz!**



GINA, ROMANIA





CALIN, ROMANIA

Greetings!

My name is Calin. I am 24 years old and I am from Romania. It is my third time in Turkey and the second time in Ankara. Coming again in this city brings so many memories, seeing my friends again makes me very happy. The first time I came to Ankara was also with the Erasmus+ program and yes the motto "Once Erasmus always Erasmus" is very true. Now I am very excited to start a new journey and to make new memories and friends.



This is not my first volunteer work. I started my career in high school in an environmental organization "Beretele Albastre" than in university with the league of the students and more others. This is not going to be my last one. I want to feel my CV full of volunteer work. Before coming to Ankara I had problems with my friends because they don't want to travel and they will all the time asking "Why do you go there? Why don't you stay here ?".



In my opinion, Romania has a problem with the young generation they don't want to exit the comfort zone and thinking about bad things that could happen. I hope that when I will go home I will try to explain that **traveling and exploring new things is the best experience that you could do.**



I stayed in Sabiha Gokcen Airport for three hours and a half. During this period of time, I didn't understand a word, heard or read or whatever. More of this, I had the sensation of not seeing the same word twice: it's was quite disturbing, but in a weird way. All those words, all those voices, all those conversations were like a nature sound, like the waves or the wind, and I was just alone, silent, slow. I was in a human-shaped bubble, and I bounced for those three hours and a half among the terminals and the shops, without trying to speak or to understand.

It's my first experience in this kind of projects, and two months are the longest time that I will spend far from home. I'm not talking about fear; it's more about the management of new feelings, new sensations, new thoughts mixed at the same time in your brain. You must find a kind of priority in that mess. My name is Domenico, I'm 25 and I come from Italy. I caught this chance in Turkey just after I finished my university studies in the last March: I wasn't so eager to start working but in the meantime I didn't want to waste my time, so I found a solution that could make me leave Italy. Also about the activities carried on by S&G, I have a very little experience but that has been a point to put in the pros' column: it's difficult, but it's exciting working in your weak sides.

My English is still at the high school level and I find a bit difficult to relate with others in a short time. I thought about stuff like this while I was approaching Ankara from the airport by bus, after a pathetic conversation made of moanings and moves for the purchase of the ticket between the driver and me. With my face sticked to the window, I slowly stopped to listen to my brain, my attention was focused on filling my eyes with views of buildings; the shops and their kitch columns; the lights; streetlights; the cars, the new and above all the old

ones, still at the side of the road; the people and then again from the beginning. Every building had my complete attention, like it had been hiding extraordinary secrets that I only could imagine. And maybe it was just a car washing.

The first days have been full of steps, words and çays. To stay with Calin, Gina, Julia and Noemi, the other volunteers, is like learning to dancing: it's just a matter of training. Maybe at the beginning you are a bit slow or not synchronized, but day after day things get better, from the cohabitation in the flat up to the shopping in Ankara. I think I need a bit more time to judge correctly these days, but it's been a good start. Definitely. I'm still grabbing hold on the five Turkish words I've learned like a drowning man grabs a life buoy. It's just a matter of time, I guess. And I hope too.

Day after day, I found a weird kind of routine, like when in the night you wake up and don't have to turn off the light to know where is the bottle of water near your bed.

The schedule of the week which is in S&G office tells me where to go each day of the week. I've been in the Saray Center, helping people with disabilities during art workshops to make some works to sell and raise funds. When you are in the Center, a bit far from Ankara, among its gardens and buildings, the first word that you think is: peace. The same word that you desire when you are surrounded by children during the other activity, the English lessons in the school. You don't have time to think, just do. From exercises in classroom to a volleyball match in the courtyard, the children want something from you, and you are there to give it to them, also if you don't know what it is: fun, knowledge, energy, english, football, information about Pisa tower or something else. By the way during your free time Ankara, as Turkey in general, doesn't stop making surprises; every day hides a gift, you have to find it.

DOMENICO, ITALY

Sometimes you must move for some kilometers far away from the capital to discover the little town of Beypazari. A suffering little bus can take you there, slowly -and I mean very slowly-, but in the same time it gives you the chance to let your eyes run over the plains and the hills together with flocks of sheep. And finally when I arrived I've discovered a town that seems to have found a little nest to hide in, occupying a very small space in all those large and wide fields.

It takes just a day to see the streets, the museums and the mosques. The free food offered by the shops in the center is also a good gasoline for your legs to keep on moving, like the rest is delighted by the cay brought in hand-made iron decorated cups: tasty for the tongue as for the eyes.

But Ankara, on the other side, can drag you off your flat using less polite manners. Although Galatasay is the Istanbul's team, lots of supporters to party the victory of the championship have flooded the streets with cars, flags, choruses, smoke bombs and noise. It has been a call stronger and louder than the one made by the megaphones of the mosques.

But the surprises are also in the museum of Anitkabir, in a cocorec at 1 A.M. or in a conversation made up of gestures and smiles just to order an et doner at lunch, in a fresh bowl of water running down your back heated by the hot steam of the hammam: it's up to you discover them.



JULIA, POLAND

Merhaba, my name is Julia, I'm from Poland and I'm a volunteer for EVS in S&G in Ankara. This is my first time in Turkey. I'm gonna stay here for two months and, I can say, that it is definitely too short!

Turkey surprised me in many ways. I've never been to the country that is so welcoming and with hospitality like in here. Plus it is incredible beautiful.

I wasn't scared at all before coming here, even if there are some prejudices of being abroad, far away from home in a country which is so different than yours and you don't speak even a word in its language.

So far, I've visited Istanbul in my first days in Turkey. Beypazari, Konya and, of course, Ankara.

Istanbul was crazy, full of tourists mixed with locals, noisy, colorful and it amazed me with variety of places I wanted to see and visit. Coming from there to Ankara was like entering another new world, these cities are really different, with different vibes and atmosphere.

So far, I enjoy living in here, the city is really big and there are still so many places to discover. I studied photography in Poland, and concerning that, Turkey is the perfect place for me! It is full of amazing beautiful places and happenings awaiting for you at each step.

I really enjoy traditional food, I fell for baklava and cig kofte especially. I can say that after one month me and my flatmates found a few of our favorite places where we got to know the owners and even made some friends with them. During the days of the week we do our chores, on weekends we sometimes travel to another cities and in the evenings we enjoy our time together and with other friends we met here.



By we, I mean our group from project, Noemi, Calin, Gina and Domenico. We make really good pack of friends after this one month, so we travel and spend most of the time together.

My first impressions about EVS here, in S&G are quite good, we have really a lot of free time, so we can discover the city and whole Turkey. Of course, we have everyday chores and schedule, but beside the fact that this is hard work, it is also an adventure and pleasure to make other people happy and to do something meaningful and good. Maybe for me sometimes it's too few of these things connected to volunteering but

travelling and getting experience are the best things to do in live and I think this is the main idea of EVS and Erasmus+.



NOEMI, ITALY

I have always felt a connection with Turkey, and when people ask me why I chose this country for my EVS I always answer that “Turkey chose me”. And I mean it when I say it.

This EVS project is giving me the chance to go deep into the Turkish culture, and after one week here I already feel in love with it. I really like how the authenticity of the culture is still preserved and I would say this is the biggest difference with most of the other countries I have visited before. I had the big luck to come here during Ramadan period and to admire the connection people have one between the others and with the religion. I love the cheerful atmosphere Turkish people welcome us in when we have iftar together at the Mosque or in front of our apartment, and I am always surprised by not feeling embarrassed for not professing the same religion and still being included.

I worked at Café Down and at the Saray Centre and I found out one more time how life is just a matter of perspective, and depending on the context everyone has something to teach, and everyone has something to learn. And I found extremely beautiful letting myself being taught by people who have so much to give and who always managed to communicate with me despite the language barrier.

I have also been to Muradye school to teach English to the kids. It was very challenging but I liked it, they are full of energy and it is very funny to hear them speaking English sometimes, so little yet so smart.

There is no moment during my EVS project when I am not learning: living with other six people from different countries can be a challenge, but it enriches me every day not only in the cultural field, but also speaking of interpersonal bonds. Day after day I find out something more about my flatmates, their fascinating lives, so different but also with a lot of common points with mine. And when I am laying on my bed, or sitting in the kitchen, or doing whatever I need, I feel at home. And it is absolutely crazy how fast this bond has been created.

Being a volunteer gives you also much freedom, you can travel around the country to see many beauties that this country offers. We've been to Beypazarı, a town not too far from Ankara and it's been an amazing experience. I felt like the time had stopped and I could enjoy a really traditional place. We appreciated the local resources which made Beypazarı famous (like carrots) and we found the town really pretty and the people really nice.



We have been to Konya, too. And I let myself go deep into the ceremony we watched in the evening. Monks (of all ages) dancing and almost fluctuating with their costumes, praying Allah. And I had goosebumps, but this does not surprise me, since it was not the first time that this happened in Turkey.

Another interesting experience was having workshops with the Job Shadowing volunteers who came here for an exchange project between System and Generation and Loesje. In these creative writing workshops, we have learned how to produce Loesje's posters, which are the main communication tool for them.

As volunteers we also took part in English conversation clubs, which have been really interesting because of the chance to exchange our opinions on different topics and mix together people from a lot of different countries and from different backgrounds to create a very diverse environment.

I feel very lucky to live this wonderful new short life, to feel like a child when I cannot communicate in Turkish; when I get emotional for a little concert in the typical coffee place down our apartment; when I learn, slowly, and with patience; when I can understand my flatmate with one look; when my co-workers in Café Down hug me and I cannot stop my mind from thinking how hard will be for me to say goodbye.

All in all, I would define these first weeks as simply amazing! And, even with the fear of the time passing too fast, there is no way I can stop my curiosity and enthusiasm to find out more and more of this wonderful and special country.

