International volunteering, a powerful experience

We just came back from a 9 days trip on a beautiful island. All the volunteers are tired but we try to enjoy every last moment together. The bond of the group is so strong that nobody wants to go home - But we need to come back to our realities, and we already plan to see each other this summer.

It’s interesting to live in a community for two months, to analyze how every one of us reacts and evolves. For example, during our vacation, an interesting thing happened to us: we decided to reach a small island by canoe but we got stuck there because of a storm. We couldn’t get back because of the wind and the waves, we had no phones, no clothes except our swimsuits, no food… It was really interesting to see each other’s reaction, some of us panicked a little bit, others tried to calm them. I’m glad because, in the end, we succeeded to go back and we stayed all together, working together to “survive” without fighting with each other. To sum up, it was a good team building activity!

I think that these two months of volunteering were one of the most intense and powerful experiences in my life. Especially after the Covid lockdown, it’s like I lived the experiences of one year in just two months. It could sound naive but I didn’t expect to get along so well with people from different cultures. I have a lot of things in common with the other volunteers like a sense of humor, movie and music references, values, energy, and willingness to contribute…

I also liked the connection with the local community, we got to know some villagers better. It was interesting to speak with them and also to work with them. I have the feeling that we contributed a little bit to their work and to their life in a way, as they contributed to mine. I want to continue to travel in such way, to create bonds with locals and to travel in a sustainable way. For me, it’s more enjoyable and empowering than consuming tourist attractions.

During the final evaluation, the Ekocentar asked us to tell them what we liked and what activities we disliked. I wrote a lot about the activities that I liked and I couldn’t find any activities that I disliked. To conclude, I think that every European youngster should do an international volunteering project. It really opens the mind and I believe it’s important to build up tolerance to create a European connection.